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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 27, 2017

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Inmate Workers Earn Dairy Worker Training Certificate

WAUPUN – Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Jon Litscher joined Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, State Representative Michael Schraa, leaders from Moraine Park Technical College, and guests to celebrate the inaugural graduation ceremony for inmate workers completing the Dairy Worker Training Certificate.

The Bureau of Correctional Enterprises, which is part of DOC, has four dairy farms near Waupun, Fox Lake, Oregon, and Green Bay, as well as a dairy in Waupun. In total, there are 60 inmate workers managing a herd of more than 500 milk cows, 50 dry cows, and 600 heifers. There are 20 inmate workers at DOC's dairy. The milk, ice cream, and sherbet produced are sold to correctional facilities in Wisconsin and Minnesota for consumption and cream is sold to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for making ice cream. The farms also produce crops for livestock feed.

In 2016, DOC produced more than 2.6 million gallons of skim milk, 1 million cups of ice cream, and 400,000 cups of sherbet for consumption and sold 322,840 pounds of milk and 526,915 pounds of cream. The total market value of these products is approximately \$5.1 million, which represents a small sliver of Wisconsin's dairy industry, which annually contributes approximately \$43.4 billion to our economy.

Moraine Park Technical College and DOC worked to develop a training program for inmate workers at DOC's Waupun State Farm. The Dairy Worker Training Certificate is a two-credit transferable credential which includes instruction in milking, feeding, cow reproduction and calf care, as well as farm maintenance and other critical skills.

The Bureau of Correctional Enterprises also operates a transition program for inmate workers to find employment in related fields upon their release.

Lt. Governor Kleefisch said: "What better way to celebrate June as Dairy Month than to congratulate the first class of graduates of this outstanding new program. With unemployment near record lows, we must expand our workforce by ensuring previously forgotten folks get off the bench and into the game. These men were an untapped resource who will now have a recognized credential and a ticket to a better life as an employee, citizen, and taxpayer."

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DOC Secretary Litscher said: "Vocational training programs are critically important to prepare inmates for life in the community while also providing opportunities for them to learn how to work as part of a team, develop a good work ethic, and communicate with colleagues. These skills are invaluable for employers seeking trained workers in the community and we look forward to furthering our partnership with Wisconsin's technical colleges."

State Representative Schraa said: "Moraine Park Technical and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections should be commended for working together to make this Dairy Worker Training Program possible. Matching capable employees with available jobs is certainly a good thing for the dairy industry, and finding steady employment is an even better thing for ex-offenders who will be re-entering the workforce."

Moraine Park Technical College Vice President of Academic Affairs Jim Eden said: "Our College has always been grateful and excited to take part in innovative ways to help employers fill positions in the workforce, and this new training program with the DOC is a great example of that. The skills gained through this training will benefit an important industry in our state, and we look forward to future partnerships that will help create qualified workers that can benefit Wisconsin employers and communities."

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