

# GA MILK REVIEW

OCTOBER 2025



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- Georgia to Receive \$531,236,000 in Federal Relief for Hurricane Helene Block Grant Program
- Sunbelt Ag Expo - The Dairy Barn Recap
- Where Passion Meets Purpose: Paul Johnson's Story of Building a First-Generation Dairy



Submit your  
nominations for the  
**2026 Bobby Walker  
Award by November  
10<sup>th</sup>, 2025.**

## SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2026 BOBBY WALKER AWARD

Georgia Milk Producers is taking nominations for the 2026 "Bobby Walker Award." In November 2019, the Georgia Milk Producers Board of Directors voted to rename the "Friend of the Dairy Industry Award" to the "Bobby Walker Award". This change was made in honor of Bobby Walker's notable career, recognizing him as one of the most influential people of the Georgia dairy industry. Each year, the Georgia Milk Producers Board of Directors presents the award to a dairy professional, farmer, and/or company that is driving Georgia's dairy industry toward a brighter future through leadership, advocacy, and service. The award presentation will take place at the 2026 Georgia Dairy Conference in January. This award is open to any individual who is involved with the dairy industry (Cooperative officials/field representatives, feed/ supply companies or salesperson, veterinarian, farmer, etc.). Please send in nominations for this award to our office by November 10th, 2025 by filling out the form on our website at [www.gadairyconference.com/friend-of-the-dairy-industry](http://www.gadairyconference.com/friend-of-the-dairy-industry) or emailing [info@gamilk.org](mailto:info@gamilk.org).

## Georgia to Receive \$531,236,000 in Federal Relief for Hurricane Helene Block Grant Program - Announcement from the GA Department of Agriculture

On September 30th, just following the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Helene, Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Tyler J Harper and United States Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke L. Rollins announced that the State of Georgia will receive approximately \$531,236,000 in federal funds for the Hurricane Helene Block Grant Program. The State of Georgia's Block Grant Program will cover future economic losses, infrastructure losses, and timber losses caused by Hurricane Helene.

"I am incredibly proud to announce the State of Georgia will receive \$531,236,000 in federal funding to provide much-needed relief to impacted farmers and producers through Georgia's Hurricane Helene Block Grant Program," said Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Tyler J Harper. "This funding is absolutely essential to help our farm families bounce back from Hurricane Helene, and our team invested hundreds of hours into the negotiation process to secure the maximum possible amount of federal funding for our state and our producers. I want to thank Sec. Brooke Rollins and her team at USDA FSA for understanding the urgency of the situation and their strong partnership and collaboration throughout this process, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Trump Administration to deliver real results for Georgia farmers."

The State of Georgia continues to work with USDA to simultaneously finalize administrative details in the State's block grant agreement and corresponding work plan. More details about the program and how to apply will be forthcoming.

*Note: The Government Shutdown that began on October 1 has delayed further work on the block grant as necessary staff within USDA has been furloughed until further notice. GDA anticipates announcing the particulars of the block grant following the reopening of the federal government.*

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## SUNBELT AG EXPO - THE DAIRY BARN RECAP

The Sunbelt Ag Expo took place October 14-16 at Spence Field in Moultrie, GA. Billed as "North America's Premier Farm Show," the Expo featured the dairy industry throughout the three-day event with demonstrations from the mobile dairy classroom, free milk and ice cream distributed by The Dairy Alliance, and a series of milking competitions that drew great crowds.

Georgia Milk Producers organized the Tuesday milking competition that pitted two-time champion Nick Place, Dean of the UGA College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, against Georgia dairy farmers Harry Schaapman (Schaapman Holsteins in Abbeville, GA) and Jiles Coble (Harmony Grove Dairy in Waynesboro, GA). The three competitors took turns hand-milking three cows on display as part of the mobile dairy classroom exhibit. Dean Place won a tight competition to retain his title as champion of the Tuesday contest after Harry Schaapman's bucket was kicked over during the first two rounds of milking.

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# SUNBELT AG EXPO - THE DAIRY BARN RECAP

The Wednesday contest was the third annual Sunbelt Dairy Showdown, featuring students from 4-H and FFA programs around the state. The Showdown is a two-part competition where 4-H and FFA chapters submit social media videos of students touting the benefits of real dairy milk and using the phrase "milk's got game" in the video. Two finalists are chosen by a panel of judges from the dairy industry to compete in the milking contest at the Expo.

This year Jones County 4-H edged Colquitt County FFA to become the new Sunbelt Dairy Showdown champions. Both teams received gifts from The Dairy Alliance and the UGA Dairy Science department and donations from the Georgia Dairy Youth Foundation and Georgia Milk Producers to use towards chapter activities for the rest of the school year. You can check out all of the video submissions for the Sunbelt Dairy Showdown on the Georgia Milk Facebook and Instagram accounts (@gamilkproducers).

The Thursday contest featured livestock exhibitors from the Beef Pavilion. This year, Merck's Josh Churchwell bested reigning champion Luke Teeple of Preifert and Will Terry of Hartford Veterinary Services.

In addition to the milking contests, attendees were treated to several milking demonstrations at the Mobile Dairy Classroom each day. Guests were able to interact with exhibits by The Dairy Alliance, showcasing cow comfort and calf care practices on modern dairy farms. Guests were also able to pet and take their picture with this year's Sunbelt calf, Clover.

Thank you to Chip Blalock and the Sunbelt Ag Expo team for their support of the dairy industry. We'd also like to thank M&B Products of Florida for donating milk and yogurt and Georgia's ACC for Milk for donating ice cream this year. Thank you UGA Dairy Science faculty for taking care of the cows on loan from Schaapman Holsteins during the show.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**November 7 - Georgia Agribusiness Council Harvest Celebration**  
The Classic Center - Athens, GA

**November 12-13 - 59<sup>th</sup> Dairy Production Road Show**  
Okeechobee, FL (Nov.12) Tifton, GA (Nov.13)

**December 7-9 - Georgia Farm Bureau Convention**  
Jekyll Island Conference Center - Jekyll Island, GA

**January 19-21 - Georgia Dairy Conference**  
Marriott Savannah Riverfront Hotel - Savannah, GA

# WHERE PASSION MEETS PURPOSE: PAUL JOHNSON'S STORY OF BUILDING A FIRST-GENERATION DAIRY

Growing up in Atmore, a small town in Southwest Alabama, Paul Johnson was immersed in farm life from an early age. He began his academic journey at Troy University before attending Auburn University, where he earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. In 1980, he launched his own dairy consultation practice, based out of Enterprise, Alabama. His first client came in 1981, and the practice quickly grew. At a time before computers became commonplace, Paul witnessed firsthand how technology has reshaped the dairy industry over the years.



For two decades, Paul worked across the Southeast, and around the world, with dairy producers, focusing on disease prevention and herd health rather than treatment alone. He consulted locally, and as far away as Japan and Australia. Although he enjoyed the business he had built, he had a desire for a career that allowed him to be home with his family and build equity.

"I was chasing the American Dream," said Paul. "I was wanting something that allowed me to be at home, grow equity, and work with family."

In 1999, the opportunity presented itself when a client put a dairy up for sale in Climax, Georgia. The dairy industry was Paul's passion, and the farm had the lifestyle he has been searching for. Paul, and his wife, Ginger, purchased Providence Dairy. What started with 350 cows has now grown into a successful business that milks 1200 cows. His background in leadership and business has served him well as a first-generation dairy farmer. Paul's transition from consulting to farming was made smoother by decades of hands-on experience and a deep understanding of the business side of dairying.

"Traveling as a vet let me see what worked and what didn't," said Paul. "I was able to avoid some of the mistakes others made. That foundation made a big difference."

Paul works side-by-side with his brother, Gary Johnson, and son, Matt Johnson. Gary, who formerly lived in Jacksonville, Florida, has a background in industrial maintenance, bringing a different invaluable skillset to the operation.

Matt earned a degree in Animal Science from Auburn University. He initially returned home to gain experience in the industry, and has been there ever since. Today, he plays a key leadership role not only on the farm but also in the entire Georgia dairy industry. He currently serves as President of the Georgia Milk Producers Board of Directors, helping lead and support dairy farmers statewide.

Paul has many favorites about the farm, but two really stand out to him.

"As someone who traveled for 20 years, being able to be home and work with my family is the best," said Paul. "And my second favorite thing has been building this business from the ground up and watching it grow."

After 26 years on Providence Dairy, Paul's story serves as a testament to family, perseverance, and the ability to adapt. From Alabama roots to international experiences, and first-generation dairy farming, Providence Dairy stands as an example to what's possible when passion meets purpose.