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Photos (attached):

1. Participants in the annual Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Ag Day Celebration hosted by Mid-State Technical College, March 11, at the American Legion Post 54 in Marshfield, Wis. From left: Alex Lendved, Mid-State Technical College dean of the Marshfield Campus and School of Applied Technology; Lois TeStrake, Marshfield city mayor; Layla Merrifield, WTCS president; Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State president; Mike Strigel, State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) assistant deputy secretary; and Mark Tyler, WTCS Board president.
2. Layla Merrifield, Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) president, addresses attendees at the WTCS Ag Day celebration hosted by Mid-State Technical College, March 11, at the American Legion Post 54 in Marshfield, Wis.

Mid-State Technical College hosts Farm Tour and Wisconsin Technical College System Ag Day Celebration

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, Wis. – Mid-State Technical College hosted this year’s Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Ag Day Celebration in conjunction with its annual Farm Tour on Tuesday, March 11. Participants experienced a day dedicated to celebrating agriculture in Wisconsin while exploring the latest technology and agricultural practices designed to enhance farming operations. The event was attended by local and state leaders, educators, students, industry representatives, farmers and professionals.

“This event is about so much more than recognizing agriculture’s impact,” said Dr. Alex Lendved, dean of Mid-State’s Marshfield Campus and School of Applied Technology. “It’s about fostering partnerships, sharing ideas and ensuring that future generations continue to grow and thrive in this industry.”

The day started with a breakfast in honor of the WTCS Ag Day Celebration at the American Legion in Marshfield. Attendees heard from special guest speakers, including a welcome from Marshfield City Mayor Lois TeStrake and remarks from WTCS President Layla Merrifield, Mid-State President Dr. Shelly Mondeik and State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Assistant Deputy Secretary Mike Strigel.

“Agriculture is very much the backbone of our district as well as the backbone of Wisconsin, in many ways,” said Mid-State President Dr. Shelly Mondeik. “Our farmers and our ag businesses make life possible for all of us. It’s an honor for our college to not only be able to support agriculture but to be able to offer agricultural programming and, today, to advocate for it as well.”

According to DATCP Assistant Deputy Secretary Strigel, agriculture in Wisconsin is a \$116 billion dollar industry with one in 10 jobs being directly tied to agriculture. Strigel further noted that “10 percent of Wisconsin farmers are considered young and emerging,” much higher than the national average.

Layla Merrifield, WTCS president, connected those numbers to the evolving support Wisconsin’s technical colleges provide to meet the changing needs of farmers. “Today’s programs are teaching things like drone piloting, iPad apps and artificial intelligence, and our ag programs produce hundreds of graduates every year that fill many available positions statewide to support this industry,” she said. “The evolution of these demands will continue as the ag industry continues to lead us in developing new production methods and technologies that will help lead the world.”

Following the Ag Day breakfast, attendees toured and learned from two farming operations. The tour focused on the use of modern technology to enhance efficiency as well as cow comfort and longevity at Romadka View Holsteins, a fifth-generation farm in Granton, Wis., owned and operated by Mark and Kelli Elmhorst. Another larger dairy operation on the tour, Heeg Brothers Dairy, LLC, in Colby, Wis., featured expansion through new buildings and increased herd size.

The day also included lunch and networking featuring Alice in Dairyland Halei Heinzel. For information about Mid-State's agriculture degree programs and professional development, visit mstc.edu/ag-pathway.



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About Mid-State Technical College

Mid-State is one of 16 colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System, offering high-demand associate degrees, technical diplomas, certificates, apprenticeship training, customized workforce training, and industry certifications. The College district serves a resident population of over 171,000, with campuses in Adams, Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids. Mid-State is also home to the Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering Technology, and Apprenticeship (AMETA™) Center, central Wisconsin's premier Healthcare Simulation Center, and the LEAD Center, supporting leadership growth. Thanks to a caring environment, state-of-the-art technology, and faculty with professional experience in the fields they teach, Mid-State graduates gain the real-world skills, knowledge, experience, and confidence they need for an in-demand career. Visit the College's website at mstc.edu/news.