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Cc: "Richmond, Lynne" <lynne.richmond@ag.state.nj.us>
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Subject: Vander Groef Wins Both New Jersey and NATIONAL Outstanding Young Farmer for 2005!!!!

February 14, 2005: News for immediate release courtesy of Lynne Richmond, New Jersey Department of Agriculture; PO Box 330; Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0330; <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture>. Contact: Lynne Richmond (609) 292-8896; lynne.richmond@ag.state.nj.us.

VANDER GROEF NAMED A NATIONAL OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER

(TRENTON) - Jeffrey Vander Groef, a Sussex County dairy farmer, has won the National Outstanding Young Farmer competition, sponsored by the United States Junior Chamber (Jaycees). Vander Groef, the 2005 New Jersey Outstanding Young Farmer, received the honor, along with three other farmers from Illinois, Iowa, and Michigan on February 12 at the National Outstanding Young Farmer Awards Congress in Modesto, California.

"Jeff is a source of pride for our state as one of only four New Jersey farmers named National Outstanding Young Farmer in the program's 50-year history," said New Jersey Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus. "Jeff is a wonderful example of our many innovative farmers who have achieved success through hard work and determination. He also is working to help sustain the dairy industry in New Jersey through development of a *Jersey Fresh* brand of milk."

Vander Groef, 37, a third generation farmer, has followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, who left the dairy business before Jeffrey entered it professionally in 1986. He started out with only \$12,000, seven registered Holsteins, a rented small farm with 30 acres of pasture, and no cropland, which required him to purchase all of his animals' forages. In the last ten years, Jeffrey has developed a prospering farm operation that includes: 337 acres, a herd of 110 mature Holsteins, plus 100 animals of various ages.

From the beginning, Vander Groef has looked for ways to make his farm a stable and viable business. He developed and implemented a soil conversation plan. He enlisted the services of a certified crop advisor on fertilizer, planning, scouting and management. His farm was the first in Sussex County to initiate a whole farm comprehensive nutrient management plan.

"Jeff has been able to achieve so much through the support of landowners, the Lange family, his family, wife Tracey and their five children, and his faith," said Secretary Kuperus. "Jeff is an example of how we can maintain a successful agricultural industry in New Jersey."

Three other New Jersey Outstanding Young Farmers have gained the National recognition: in 2001, Robert C. Von Thun Jr., a Middlesex County vegetable farmer; in 1989, James Giamarese, a Middlesex County vegetable farmer; in 1985, Abbott W. Lee, a Burlington County cranberry farmer.

The purpose of the Outstanding Young Farmer program is to bring about a greater interest in the farmer, to foster better urban-rural relations through the understanding of the farmers' problems, to develop an appreciation of their contributions and achievements, and to inform the agribusiness community of the growing urban awareness of farmers' importance and impact on the American economy.

RFD TV will air the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce National Outstanding Young Farmer Awards banquet this Saturday. The event will be shown on U.S. Farm Report which will air 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 19.

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