

Business



Door County dairy farmers saved by donations pay it forward, pray for better milk prices

Liz Welter Door County Advocate ■ USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

CLAY BANKS - A year ago, Dale and Karen Cihlar faced a bleak Christmas. Their 145-year-old dairy farm was failing, and bankruptcy loomed in their future.

Fast forward to December 2018, and the picture is much different — thanks to the generosity of family, community and people across the nation.

The couple’s dairy farm dilemma echoes the plight of farmers across the state: Years of stagnant milk prices, growing piles of bills and depleted savings accounts are forcing the demise of dairy farms, small and large.

Wisconsin is on track to lose more dairy farms this year than in any year since at least 2003, according to state Agriculture Department figures for dairy producer licenses reported by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

As of Nov. 1, the dairy state had lost 660 cow herds from a year earlier, and the number of herds was down nearly 49 percent from 15 years ago, according to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

The number of dairy cows in Wisconsin has remained steady, even as the number of farms has fallen. That’s because the remaining dairy operations are, in many cases, much bigger. But even some of the bigger farms have not survived, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

When the Cihlars’ 2017 holiday season was followed by more rejections for a \$35,000 farm loan, Karen decided to try something she knew Dale would never agree with — asking other people to help them.

“He’s too proud, but I thought if people knew, maybe they would help,” Karen said.

Now, the couple is facing another Christmas season. This time, it’s with relief and gratitude as Dale and Karen are able to provide some financial assistance to other dairy farmers facing the same struggles.

Karen’s GoFundMe plea asking for \$35,000 posted March 18 quickly surpassed that goal by the end of August. Folks from around the nation continued to donate, enabling the couple to pay off debts, plan for the future and help other struggling farmers.

“We still can’t believe how fortunate we are to get this far,” Karen said.

Yet, the couple “worries daily what will happen to us and other dairy farmers with the milk prices being down again,” she said.

The plight of the Cihlar farm, followed by USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin, began with Karen’s reaction to donations on their GoFundMe page in May. Donations were slowly growing for the couple to

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ABOVE: Dale and Karen Cihlar, with family dog Coke, have much to be thankful for this holiday season.

MAIN: Dale and Karen Cihlar help their 4-year-old grandson Case maneuver his bicycle through a muddy area on their rural southern Door County farm on Tuesday. PHOTOS BY TINA M. GOHR/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Krider Pharmacy to close after 63 years



Jeff Bollier
Streetwise
USA TODAY NETWORK - WIS.

GREEN BAY - Krider Pharmacy & Gifts will end its 63-year run on the west side at the end of this year.

The second-generation family business not only thrived for six decades, but it did so in the same space, the strip center at 1119 W. Mason St., the entire time. Owner Gary Krider carried on the treat-customers-like-family ethos his father, Bernard, instilled from the moment he started the business with a soda fountain and gift shop in March 1955.

This was before Military Avenue was

a thing. This is before strip malls were a thing. In fact, Krider Pharmacy’s website indicates Marquette Center, where it’s located, was the first strip shopping center in Green Bay.

“My family feels very honored and very privileged to be supported so wonderfully all these years by our customers,” Krider said. “We want to thank them very much.”

The pharmacy segment of the business closed Oct. 8 when Krider transferred it to Walgreens. The rest of the business will close Dec. 31. All gifts in the store are marked at least 50 percent off now, and all durable medical equipment is marked 40 percent off, Krider

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Krider Pharmacy & Gifts, 1119 W. Mason St., will close at the end of the month after 63 years in business. JEFF BOLLIER/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN