

A Leadership Change

John Zander's last day guiding the growth of this central Minnesota feed manufacturing company will be Jan. 10, 2020. He has decided to retire after 15 years as general manager of Munson Lakes Nutrition.

John was hired by the Munson family in March of 1984 as a truck driver. "I spent my first 10 years delivering feed and getting to know the customers in our area," John recalls.

In 1994, John took a job inside the Howard Lake feed mill to learn more about that part of the business.

In 1996, Land O'Lakes® along with local cooperatives purchased the Munson Feed Company from the family. They renamed it Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN).

With the new ownership, John was named production supervisor, responsible for all production, the employees, and the trucks. In 2002, general manager Dave Pruess promoted John to assistant manager.

When Pruess took a job in Colorado, John applied to be general manager of MLN, and the board hired him in April 2004.

"It's been a quick 15 years," says John.

Under John's leadership, output of our Howard Lake mill (in the background) rose from 35,000 tons to a high of 175,000 tons annually.



Comparing then to now

MLN has grown as a company. When John took over in 2004, the Howard Lake Mill manufactured around 35,000 tons of feed and most of their customers were within 30 to 50 miles of Howard Lake. At the company's manufacturing high point, it made 174,000 tons of feed. Today, MLN distributes feed into North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and most of Minnesota.

"I think we had six or seven trucks on the road when I took over," says John. "Today we have 14 trucks on the road daily."

The Howard Lake mill is greatly improved in its efficiency and capacity to manufacture quality feed products. Equipment has been upgraded. The pelleting process has been improved a couple of times. "That's one of the things that sets Munson Lakes apart from its competition," says John.

"We manufacture feed for thirteen other companies," he continues. "That's a wholesale business we didn't have years ago."

While most of its customers are dairy and beef producers, the Howard Lake mill also manufactures some hog and poultry feeds, including turkey barn rations.

"We are a licensed manufacturer for Purina®, so we have had to go through some quality assurance testing, which has benefited us," says John. In addition to Purina, the central Minnesota feed company also manufactures its own MLN line. "So we can offer our customers more than one option," John notes.

In the future, John expects the dairy industry to continue to change. "Small dairies will exit the industry and we're going to serve more large dairies," says John, who adds that MLN must continue to increase in efficiency if it is to survive and thrive.

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“We’re going to have to concentrate on manufacturing the most efficient way possible, because our customers will need to find the least expensive way to produce milk,” states John.

A quality product has always been important as MLN has grown. “We always refer back to the quality product that we produce as in Our Mission, printed at the end of every newsletter, and we base every decision on fairness and decency,” says John. “That’s what we need to continue to do.”

As urban folks move to the country and start hobby farms, Munson Lakes Nutrition has increased its business with lifestyle customers who walk in the door of the company’s Country Store at Howard Lake, where bagged feeds and merchandise are sold.

Looking into the future

John is excited about what MLN will do to set itself apart from other feed companies. “Why should a dairy 60 miles from Howard Lake buy feed from us instead of someone else?” says John. He adds, “The company’s sales staff is working hard to spell this out and to develop new products to keep dairies looking to MLN for their quality feed and expert advice.”

What will John do after he retires? “I really like to fish and hunt and golf, so I think I’ll do a little of that,” he says. “I also have a honey-do list that’s quite long.” John says his brothers and sisters are all within 20 miles of Howard Lake, so he’ll continue to do things with his very close family.

“I have a grandchild here at Howard Lake, and another one on the way,” John adds. “I’m sure that will also take up some of my time, as well as spending more time with my wife Shari and just enjoying life.”



Our general manager at his desk in Howard Lake.

John wants to thank the Munson family for giving him his start, the MLN board for their trust and support, and the customers for trusting this company to be their feed supplier. “I also want to thank everyone — from our employees to our vendors — who I have worked with over the years and who helped make Munson Lakes Nutrition successful,” he concludes.

EDITOR’S NOTE: The MLN board of directors has been hard at work interviewing candidates for the general manager’s job. Expect an announcement in the next newsletter — and on our website before that. ●



Giving John a Proper Send-off

We asked three people to share their thoughts on retiring general manager John Zander. Below is a sampling of their recollections. Go to www.munsonlakes.com for their full comments.

John Zander is the real deal. Always straight up. He made common sense decisions and always tried to do the right thing. The man has the highest morals and always led us by example. I’m going to miss him.

—Doug Sawatzke, Sales Nutritionist, Munson Lakes Nutrition. Doug has known John since 1977 when they attended Howard Lakes Waverly High School together.

“John is very loyal and open. He pretty much tells it the way it is, and we really appreciate that as board members. If there are problems or concerns, John wants to fix it and get it done. John puts a lot of time into the company and when something needs to be done, he’s right in there with everyone, working side-by-side to make it happen.”

—Paul Berning, Green Waves Farm, a robotic dairy 30 minutes from Howard Lake. Paul is on the board of Munson Lakes Nutrition.

“We’re located about 80 miles from Munson Lakes, and I remember the day John personally drove out to Manthei Farm to deliver a feed additive to me. It was then he told me he was retiring. I said ‘NO — I’m just not going to let you retire!’ We always said I would be retiring before he did.”

—Doug Manthei, hog producer who has known John for 30+ years and who supplies pork chops for about 1,000 people attending MLN’s Customer Appreciation Dinner every year. ●

New Weapon Against Respiratory Disease



By **Jake Reed, Sales Specialist, Purina Feeds**

Purina Animal Nutrition introduces a new era of Purina beef calf starter feeds, now with the revolutionary RX3™ Immune Support Technology. The unique formula addresses

weaning-time stressors and meets respiratory challenges head-on.

“Respiratory challenges affect one out of every five head and cost the beef industry about \$1 billion annually,” says Ron Scott, Ph.D. and Purina’s beef technical innovation director.

RX3 is a precise combination of prebiotics, probiotics and plant extracts. It works by preparing calves’ natural defense for an improved response to stress and respiratory challenges.

Research leading to RX3 Immune Support Technology started in 2015. It involved seven studies and third-party research partners, including USDA-ARS, University of Minnesota and North Dakota State University.

Research demonstrated calves fed Purina starters with RX3 gained, on average, six pounds more than the control group within a 30-day period.

RX3 is exclusively available in Purina starter feeds. Ask your Munson Lakes nutritionist about Purina starters with RX3 Immune Support Technology or visit www.purinamills.com/RX3. ●

Experienced Trucker Joins MLN

After graduating Dassel-Cokato high school in 1999, Josh Schindele worked sewer and water construction with his father for 10 years. Then, he joined Dassel Co-op where he gained experience as a bulk fuel and feed truck driver.

Later, he and a friend started their own business, crisscrossing the nation with semis.

Since February 2019, Josh has driven for Munson Lakes Nutrition. Most of his routes are within a hundred-mile radius of Howard Lake driving a bag truck.

“My grandpa was a truck driver and my dad was a driver for a while, too,” says Josh. “I like driving because I enjoy it.” Josh says he’s traveled just about every road in the U.S.

“When you enjoy something, you’ve got to pursue it,” he continues, “Every day is a challenge and a blessing when you make it home safe.”

Josh is at home on a six-acre hobby farm near Dassel with his wife Chastidy and a blended family. He enjoys riding his motorcycle and tinkering with old cars. ●



Add NutriTek® to your Cows’ Diets



By **Ted Radintz, MLN Sales Manager**

NutriTek is Diamond V’s next generation dairy technology. It is an advanced nutritional health product providing a new level of support for optimal digestive health and balanced immune function for all dairy animals.

Dairy cows experience production challenges year-round. The cow’s body naturally coordinates the use of energy and nutrients to support her genetic potential for milk production. NutriTek supports the biology of today’s high-performing dairy cow.

Research shows NutriTek supports:

- Improved rumen health
- More dry matter intake in early lactation

- Maintenance of body weight
- More efficient feed utilization
- More milk over the entire lactation

NutriTek generates significant additional income over feed cost throughout lactation, with returns of approximately \$0.50 per cow per day. Talk to your Munson Lakes sales nutritionist today about adding NutriTek to your dairy cows’ diet. For more information, visit diamondv.com and click on products. ●

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Producer of the Year Announced

The Miron Dairy Farm of Hugo, Minnesota, has been selected by the Minnesota Milk Producers Association as their 2019 Producer of the Year. This honor was formally conferred to the family Dec. 3, 2019 during the organization's annual Dairy Conference and Expo.

The Miron family consists of Fran and Mary Ann Miron, their sons Paul and Andrew Miron, and their sons' families. The farm was selected for its extensive involvement with their urban neighbors and the ag community. The farm has 120 cows and 800 acres of crops. The grandchildren on the farm are the sixth generation living on the land.

The Miron family has been long-time customers of Munson Lakes Nutrition. MLN sales nutritionist Austin Davis works with the family on their herd's rations.

"The Miron family is deserving of this award," says Austin. "They are great dairymen who provide exceptional care for their livestock and cropland."

He adds, "The family continually finds ways to improve their farm and are innovative to ensure success in the years to come."

The Miron family is actively involved in the agriculture community, according to Austin. They participate in their local county American Dairy Association and in the Farm Bureau, locally and on a state level.

"The family also loves to teach their urban neighbors about agriculture," says Austin. "This past September, the Miron family hosted a Breakfast on the Farm event that 2,000 people attended to learn more about agriculture and their farm."

MLN helped sponsor the Washington County Breakfast on the Farm, which featured an educational display on "what cows actually eat on the farm."

Munson Lakes Nutrition congratulates Miron Dairy Farm for their achievements in milk production and agriculture in general, and for their outreach to the consuming public. We are glad to be called your advisors and friends. ●

Lucas Sjostrom, Minnesota Milk's executive director, presents Fran Miron and his sons Paul and Andrew with the Producer of the Year award. (Photo courtesy of Minnesota Milk Producers.)

OUR MISSION

Some things never change — even after 80+ years.

THE VALUES THAT SHAPED OUR HERITAGE WILL REMAIN. MUNSON LAKES NUTRITION WILL CONTINUE TO:

- Manufacture A Great Product At A Fair Price.
- Give Great Customer Service.
- Base Every Decision On Fairness And Decency.



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