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Ohio Dairy Farmers Honors Space Shuttle Program at 2011 Ohio State Fair, July 27-Aug. 7

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) — The 2011 butter display at the Ohio State Fair pays tribute to our nation's space program and recognizes the retirement of NASA's space shuttle program.

Each year, the American Dairy Association Mideast selects an icon or theme to feature in butter that is non-political, non-controversial and reflects optimism and broad audience-appeal. This year's theme is no exception as Ohio's dairy farmers recognize that our state has made significant contributions to flight and space exploration.

The retirement of the space shuttle program marks the end of an era. Throughout most of the history of the space program, Ohio produced more astronauts than any other state. In fact, twenty-four astronauts have called Ohio home, including space pioneers John Glenn and Neil Armstrong, who we previously honored by sculpting in butter. Ohio's dairy farmers also previously paid a butter tribute to the Wright Brothers, Ohio's fathers of aviation.

The 2011 butter display is one of the most complex displays ever sculpted at the Ohio State Fair and features the interior of a space shuttle cockpit with intricate details such as flight controls, dials, gauges and display systems. Inside the cockpit, an astronaut floats above the command console while enjoying freeze dried ice cream. These sculptures share the cooler with the traditional life-size butter cow and calf.

The butter display was sculpted by a group of three Cincinnati-based free-lance technical sculptors engaged primarily in the toy industry. Crafted from approximately 1,550 pounds of butter, donated in part by Dairy Farmers of America, the display was completed in 475 hours, in which approximately 250 of those hours were spent actually sculpting the butter.

The sculptors began by building wooden and steel frames to support the weight of the butter. From 55-pound blocks, the butter is sliced into manageable loaves and is layered to cover the frames. After many hours of molding and smoothing the butter in a 45-degree cooler, each sculpture begins to take shape. Fine details are added last.

The butter display at the Ohio State Fair attracts more than 500,000 visitors each August and has reflected positive ideals and cultural trends in Ohio for over 45 years, with several exhibits gaining national media attention with themes that have universal appeal.

The butter display can be found in the Dairy Products Building at the Ohio Expo Center, home of the Ohio State Fair. The Dairy Products Building is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and offers a variety of Ohio-produced dairy foods including ice cream, milkshakes, cheese sandwiches, milk and yogurt.

The butter sculpture display and the Dairy Products Building are sponsored by the American Dairy Association Mideast, Ohio's dairy-farmer funded marketing and promotion program.

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American Dairy Association Mideast is a farmer-funded organization responsible for increasing demand for dairy products on behalf of dairy farmers in Ohio. For more information, visit www.drink-milk.com and www.ohiodairyfarmers.com