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FORGET SANTA. THE BUTTER COW IS COMING TO TOWN FOR CHRISTMAS IN JULY!

ADA Mideast triple-dog-dares fairgoers to join them in celebrating a festive piece of Ohio history

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) Tuesday, July 24, 2018 - Santa won't be coming to town for five more months, but the magic of Christmas is already in the air, as the annual butter sculpture display was unveiled by the American Dairy Association Mideast. The butter cow is in the holiday spirit, and so is the display.

This year's butter display celebrates 35 years since the release of the classic holiday film, "A Christmas Story," which was filmed in Cleveland, Ohio. Favorite scenes from the movie were recreated in butter, including the playground scene where Ralphie's classmate Flick gets himself into a sticky situation when he can't back down from a triple-dog-dare. But this time, Flick isn't alone. The butter calf's tongue is stuck to the pole alongside Flick as the traditional butter cow looks on.

Along with Flick and the butter cow and calf, the 2018 display features a Christmas tree made of butter, decorated with real twinkling, multicolored Christmas lights. The display also includes butter sculptures of Ralphie in his bunny suit from Aunt Clara, Randy in his snowsuit who is still unable to put his arms down and the iconic Christmas Story leg lamp, which the old man would certainly define as "indescribably beautiful!"

While it may be hot outside, it feels almost cold enough for a white Christmas inside the 46-degree cooler where sculptors spent about 400 of the 500 hours it took to complete the display. The sculptures are formed from about 2,200 pounds of butter, donated in part by Dairy Farmers of America.

The sculptors begin by welding steel frames to support the weight of the butter. From 55-pound blocks, the butter is sliced into manageable loaves and layered on the frames. After many hours of molding and smoothing the butter, each sculpture begins to take shape. Fine details are added last.

The 2018 display was crafted by a group of five Ohio-based technical sculptors including lead sculptors Paul Brooke and Alex Balz of Cincinnati, Tammy Buerk of West Chester, Erin Swearingen of Columbus and Matt Davidson, a dairy farmer from Sidney.

The butter display is a long-standing tradition of Ohio's more than 2,200 dairy farm families. Each year, the theme of the butter display is one of the best kept secrets leading up to the fair.

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. The butter display attracts more than 500,000 visitors annually at the Ohio State Fair and often gains media attention nationwide.

The butter display is in the Dairy Products Building at the Ohio Expo Center, home of the Ohio State Fair. The outside of the building features a brand-new, hand-painted mural saluting those who are Undeniably Devoted to Dairy. This epic display of devotion, which spans approximately 58 feet in length and 14 feet in height, celebrates Ohio's dairy farmers and their proud contributions to communities across the state.

While visiting the dairy building, fair visitors can also learn about how Ohio's dairy farmers care for their cows, their land and their communities. The Dairy Products Building is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and offers a variety of Ohio-produced dairy foods including ice cream, milkshakes, cheese sandwiches and milk. The fair will run from Wednesday, July 25 through Sunday, Aug. 5.

The butter display and the Dairy Products Building are sponsored by the American Dairy Association Mideast, Ohio's dairy-farmer funded marketing and promotion program. For more information, visit www.drink-milk.com.

MULTIMEDIA AVAILABLE: For broadcast quality b-roll and sound bites and high resolution stills, you can access the American Dairy Association Mideast's multimedia newsroom here: <http://bit.ly/2L5xHAv>

*Password: butter **by entering the password you agree to honor the embargo***

Multimedia is available for free and unrestricted use with a courtesy to the American Dairy Association in a graphic or voice over.

*Only one pool camera was allowed inside during the sculpting process, so this is the only place you'll find that video and photos!

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