

# RETAIL PATRIOTS EVENT WINS HONORS AGAIN

Annual honors program recognizing those going 'beyond the call of duty' to support our military is finalist in international competition.

BY PAUL CHAPA

**F**or the second year in a row, *Frozen & Refrigerated Buyer's* Retail Patriots event has been selected as a finalist in FOLIO: + min's FAME Awards competition.

The event received honors this year in the "Social Good/Charity Event" category. Winners and honorable mentions will be recognized during an awards breakfast April 2 at the Yale Club in New York City.

## FIERCELY COMPETITIVE

"The international awards competition is fiercely competitive and placing as a finalist is a major accomplishment," said Johnny Harris, president of Johnny L. Harris Consulting and a contributing editor at the magazine.

*Frozen & Refrigerated Buyer's* Retail Patriots event, held for the past five years during the National Frozen



& Refrigerated Foods Association convention, honors retailers that go "above and beyond" in support of our troops and veterans.

"The Retail Patriots event recognizes and encourages food retailers and others allied to the trade to go the extra mile in serving our heroes," according to Harris. "During World War II, 40% of Americans were serving in uniform. Now that number is only 1%, and the remaining 99% of us should find a way to thank and support our military, vets and their families for their sacrifice and service."

Last year for the first time, two non-retailers were also honored, spreading recognition wider throughout the industry. Multiple sponsors supported the event, which is run under the auspices of FISH (Food Industry Serving Heroes), a 501c3 corporation. Through tax-deductible donations from sponsors and supporters in the industry, FISH fulfills its mission to provide active duty military, veterans and their families with wheelchairs, service dogs, financial literacy programs and jobs within the food industry. Proceeds are also used to continue the Retail Patriots event during the NFRA convention, raising awareness of the plight of injured veterans and building participation in "Heroes Dinners" held throughout the country.

For details on how your company can participate, contact: Johnny Harris at 803-984-2594 or harrisjl@comporium.net, or Gary Spinazze at 952-237-0590 or ssunshine3@optonline.net. ■

## WHY ARE DAIRY PRICES SO HIGH?

BY DENNIS COLLINS AND MONICA GELINAS

**A**fter years of relative sluggishness, dairy prices have spiked to near-record levels with milk, butter and cheese up by 30% from late November through early February. This has come at a time when dairy prices tend to fall. Historically, manufacturers have taken advantage of the post-holiday lull in demand to rebuild their stocks — but not this year so far.

What's happened? First, record-high milk prices occurred in tandem with substantially lower feed costs. These two factors typically spur an increase in dairy herd size and milk supply, but not so far this year. Early signs suggest that dairy producers may be increasing their capacity, but

expanding the number of producing cows will take time. Second, on the back of static milk supply, there's a tremendous upsurge in export demand for American dairy products, especially from China.

China's growing need for imported dairy products began with the 2008 melamine disaster, which ended in child deaths and a broad mistrust of domestically produced dairy products.

Over the past year, China's domestic dairy production also suffered a significant setback.

While there should be some relief in United States prices as dairy producers expand their herds and milk production, dairy prices will remain high this year, especially in the first half. Uncertainties about the effects of the California drought have everyone on edge.

Retailers can expect less of an immediate effect in the premium and natural categories. Higher-quality items from smaller producers have

gained traction to manage risk and command premium from consumers. Some buyers may replace one cheese with a similar but less-expensive option. If prices do spike significantly, manufacturers may explore ingredient substitutions.

## RELUCTANT TO REBUILD

While cheese and butter manufacturers are making slightly more product than last year, they are reluctant to rebuild depleted stocks at historically high prices. Additionally, ice cream production ranges from 10% to 28% lower than a year ago. Yogurt production has shown the strongest growth so far. ■

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