

RON SUCHECKI HAS A NEW HEART!



Suchecki on Oct. 20, 10 days after his heart transplant. His son, Ron Jr., sent us the photo with a note: 'These are not very good camera phone shots but considering the subject, it was the best we could do.'

Early on the morning of Oct. 10, doctors at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas cracked open Ron Suchecki's chest to give him a new heart. Suchecki, the vp of retail sales at Shenandoah, Pa.-based Ateeco (Mrs. T's Pierogies), hadn't been feeling up to snuff the last couple of years, huffing and puffing on stairs that had never challenged him before.

Then one day at his doctor's office, he went into atrial fibrillation — "my heart was bouncing around pretty hard," he recalls. It wasn't the first time, or the last. In the months that followed, Ron was put on a variety of meds that didn't correct the problem, had electric paddles applied to his chest a few times, and even underwent two ablations — where a device is passed up through the arteries into the heart to burn out faulty tissue that may be triggering an abnormal rhythm.

No luck. Then one day, a team of doctors passed around Ron's echocardiogram and one of them — "My doctor's dad, he's 75 but still practices a bit" — made sense of it all.

It turns out Ron had cardiac amyloidosis, caused by deposits of an abnormal protein (amy-

loid) in the heart tissue, so it couldn't pump properly. Without a heart transplant, your life expectancy can be less than a year.

Ron and his wife Terry fought to get him on transplant lists at several different hospitals around the country. Things didn't look too good until a sudden phone call the night of Oct. 9. He'd been on the transplant list at Baylor for only three days.

Yes, he's doing fine now. No pain in the chest whatever, but feeling a bit weak, naturally. In the past, whenever you asked Ron how he was doing, he'd say "Excellent, but improving." For now, at least, the answer has been changed to "Blessed, and highly favored."

If you want to get in touch, e-mail him at sucheckir.t@att.net, or go to www.caringbridge.org/visit/ronaldsucheckir and follow a journal Terry is keeping. ■ —Warren Thayer

MILK PRICING UP 35%

Here's what happened, and what you can expect next.

BY MONICA GELINAS AND DENNIS COLLINS

As of the USDA's September pricing, milk hit a new record high price, up 35% from a year ago. The irony is that in an environment of lower input costs and high profit margins, production has not expanded as expected.

So what went awry?

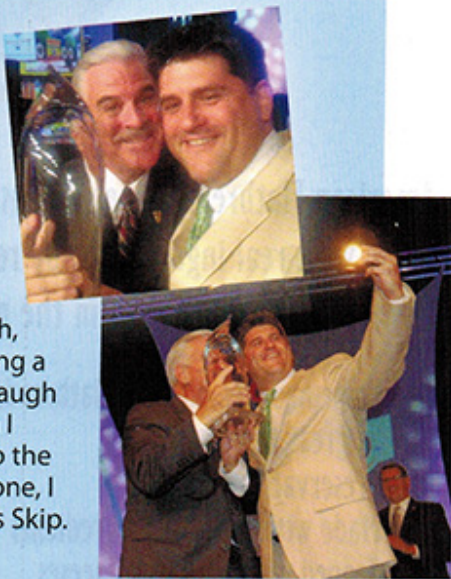
First, having suffered losing operating margins in recent years, producers chose to retire debt and make postponed capital improvements this year instead of increasing herd population.

Second, a surge in export demand this year depleted dairy inventories, driving cheese and butter prices to record levels in September. The consequent spike in milk demand (to make products) was not met with a sufficient jump in supply.

But consumer price relief may be on the horizon. Export demand has evaporated as the United States priced itself out of the world market and a seasonal drop-off in domestic demand for dairy products should occur after the holiday season, improving stocks and reducing prices.

The trend for full(er) fat across the board to support "good taste" and "real food" is growing. Skimmed

When Giant Eagle's Tony Hatok picked up his Golden Penguin award from National Frozen and Refrigerated Foods Association President Skip Shaw at the group's annual convention last month, he couldn't resist taking a selfie. It got the best laugh of the evening. "When I saw him coming up to the stage with his cell phone, I wondered why," recalls Skip. "It was great."



milk items are being replaced by 2% and full fat, as we see in the yogurt aisle. Even more decadent options in cream and dairy is not being shunned. Likely, this trend will remain as consumers opt for flavor. ■

Collins, a director at Trilateral, Inc., can be reached at dcollins@trilatinc.com. Gelinas, founder of Grit Work LLC, can be reached at monica@gritwork.com. They provide purchasing and risk management advisory services to the food industry.