

## The Daphne Zepos Teaching Award Endowment Vision

August 2017

The American Cheese Society conference just ended. Loads of attendees are still talking about the incredible presentation on Basque cheesemakers. Cheesemakers are heading home to test techniques. They took the presenter's email address so they could get more details and follow up with questions. Retailers are excited to find and carry more of these cheeses. They're inviting the presenter to their shops to give the presentation to their crew and customers.

The presenter was the fourth winner of the Daphne Zepos Teaching Award. The award—and the work that comes out of it—has been recognized across the industry as one of the most positive additions to the cheese world in recent years. Each of the winners has traveled abroad then returned to North America to share what they learned. All four have presented at the ACS conference, formally sharing what they learned to improve their cheese teaching.

They did amazing work. They would have all made Daphne happy. More importantly, knowing the cheese world is better for the learning and teaching that these cheese professionals have shared would have made her proud. Everyone involved in the program—people from across the industry who knew Daphne well and who are equally committed to craft tradition and high quality cheese—are engaged and excited about how this is helping the cheese world. We miss Daphne dearly but we're honored to be able to contribute to educating about cheese, something she devoted such a significant part of her life to.

As the presentation wrapped up on the first day of the conference this year's award winner was announced. She was chosen among six candidates. Each applied for the award using our documented process, which included getting nominated by another member, securing two letters of recommendation from other ACS members and completing an application. As usual the winner was announced on the first day of the ACS conference, the better to honor Daphne's good work and to help the winner connect with others knowing that they've received the award.

Five years in, the award program proceeds smoothly and effectively. Its basic tenets are solid. The candidate is a member in good standing of the American Cheese Society. They have at least three years of experience in the cheese industry. They're a food professional—not a consumer or writer with an interest in cheese. Like Daphne, they have a passion for teaching. We want to grow new leaders, so preference is given to candidates who are younger. The winner uses the award to travel to learn about traditional cheesemaking techniques. The award covers travel and lodging and provides a modest stipend for living expenses. The recipient presents their work formally in writing in the ACS newsletter and in a full-blown presentation at the conference. Overall, the award's expectations are understandable, transparent and touched up annually to make sure they're current and improved.

While at the ACS, the Teacher's board met to go over the rules and make some changes to improve things. The original board of Ari Weinzweig, Peggy Smith, Greg O'Neill, Emilio Mignucci, Cathy Gaffney, Cathy Strange, Charlotte Kamin, Sam Mogamman, Debra Dickerson and Jason Hinds has changed a little, but most of the members are still active and engaged. The board meets once a year, directed by the endowment's president—Mo Frechette originally, and he's passing the presidency on when his terms expires, as will the board members—and then communicates intermittently throughout the year electronically to assure that things are on course.

The funding for the award is solid. We raised \$250,000 in 2012 when we kicked off the endowment at the ACS conference. Small donations were gathered by crowdsourcing on a webpage. Larger ones were gathered by key members of the board. While paying out the Award of at least \$5,000 each year, we've built up another \$50,000 in equity in the account, allowing it to keep up with inflation and consider greater donations in the future. We do fundraising events at ACS conferences and elsewhere year to year and we're hoping to create a second award within five years.