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LAFCU, Quality Dairy partner for third annual Paczki Palooza to benefit local charities

Three-time champion wins \$1,000 for Judson Memorial Baptist Church

LANSING, Mich. — LAFCU partnered with Quality Dairy for the third consecutive year as co-sponsor of Pączki Palooza, the popular pączki eating contest held Feb. 13 at the REO Town Clubhouse in Lansing.

The event centers around the sweet goodies leading up to Fat Tuesday — the traditional feast day before the Christian season of Lent. Pączki (pronounced POONCH-kee) are rich, filled Polish pastries commonly enjoyed in the Midwest.

Paczki Palooza 2026 was QD's kick off of its 90th anniversary celebration. Founded in 1936, both LAFCU and Quality Dairy have served the Lansing community for nine decades. Their continued partnership through Paczki Palooza blends local tradition with charitable giving.

“Quality Dairy and LAFCU have been partners for several years, and it’s great to collaborate with an organization that reaches so many audiences and genuinely cares about the community,” said Phil



Six contestants compete during Quality Dairy's Paczki Palooza at the REO Town Clubhouse in Lansing, where LAFCU partnered as a co-sponsor for the third year to help boost charitable giving.



Three-time champion Akiem Harshman celebrates after earning a \$1,000 donation for Judson Memorial Baptist Church during Paczki Palooza, with LAFCU partnering in the event to support the winning charity.

“natural fit,” said Kellie Swiger, creative director at LAFCU. “It’s a fun Lansing tradition, but at the end of the day, it’s about directing real dollars to nonprofits that are doing important work.”

Six invited contestants competed in an expanded five-minute eating window — the largest field yet — as attendees cheered them on.

Akiem

Harshman claimed his third consecutive title, eating six paczki in five minutes — double last year’s winning total of three in three minutes — and earning a \$1,000 donation for Judson Memorial Baptist Church.

“It feels really

good to be able to win this money for the church,” said Harshman. “I’m glad to help the church and the

Platte, marketing and category manager at Quality Dairy. “We’ve worked together on several events, and this contest is always a fun way to bring people together while supporting important causes.”

Quality Dairy provided prize money benefiting each contestant’s selected charity. For the grand prize, LAFCU contributed half of the \$1,000 donation for the winner’s charity.

“For organizations rooted in community service, this is a



Contestants and representatives from LAFCU and Quality Dairy gather following Paczki Palooza in Lansing, an annual eating contest that directs donations to local nonprofits.

community. The church does a ton of outreach, and it's the church I grew up going to, so being able to give back where I can is important."

Additional charitable donations awarded through the contest included:

- **Second place:** DeSean Whipple, DJ, Power 96.5, Haven House - \$300
- **Third place:** Brian Farnham, board president, Community Circle Players, Riverwalk Theatre -\$200
- **Fourth place:** Mark Lawrence, chief of staff for Mayor Andy Schor, American Red Cross -\$100
- **Fifth place:** Terry Stevens, on-air personality, Q106, National VFW Home - \$100
- **Sixth place:** Halatu Musa, food influencer, Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence - \$100



LAFCU representatives and mascot Laff-e the Cow join Quality Dairy's team to mark the third annual Paczki Palooza, continuing a Lansing tradition that blends fun and philanthropy.

By combining friendly competition with charitable giving, LAFCU and Quality Dairy once again demonstrated how longstanding community institutions can make a meaningful impact — one paczki at a time.

About LAFCU

Founded in 1936, LAFCU (pronounced laugh-cue) is a not-for-profit, member-owned credit union open to all who live, work, worship or attend school in Michigan, and to Michigan businesses. LAFCU serves more than 74,000 members and holds over \$1 billion in assets. With a particular focus on

serving people of modest means, LAFCU is committed to enhancing its members' financial well-being and creating long-lasting positive change across generations. Awarded the prestigious Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service Award, LAFCU is known for its people-helping-people mission, which has led to award-winning financial literacy programs for all ages. A three-time honoree as a national 'Best Credit Union to Work For,' named a Best Place to Work for Women, and recognized globally for its diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, LAFCU stands out for its commitment to creating an inclusive workplace. Learn more at www.lafcu.com.

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