



Angus Attends YCC

Angus Foundation sponsors Tennessee native Lake Elliott to represent Angus at Young Cattlemen's Conference.

by *Shelby Mettlen*, assistant editor

With nearly 37 years of membership with the American Angus Association on his résumé, Lake Elliott knows a thing or two about the business. That could have something to do with Elliott being chosen to represent the Angus breed at this year's Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC) in June.

Going on its 39th year in 2018, YCC aims to develop leadership qualities in young cattlemen and women ages 25 to 50 to expose them to all aspects of the beef industry. Since the program's inception in 1980, more than 1,000 young industry leaders have participated in the program.

Helping lead the industry

A native of Adams, Tenn., Elliott grew up on his family's registered seedstock operation, Robert Elliott and Sons, which is now home to 260 head of registered Angus cattle. He attended the University of Tennessee-Knoxville where he studied animal science with an emphasis in production and management.

In 2009, Elliott was selected to participate in the Beef Leaders Institute (BLI), and in 2012 served as the adult chair of the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) education committee. He served six years as a director



with the Tennessee Beef Industry Council (TBIC), the state's beef checkoff partner, beginning in 2010. Four of those years, he served as vice chairman. Elliott also served as Montgomery County president of the Young Farmers and Ranchers (YFR) organization from 2010-2013.

"Lake was the prime candidate for the Young Cattlemen's Conference, based on his longtime involvement in the beef cattle industry and Angus breed," says Milford Jenkins, president of the Angus Foundation. "The Elliott family has been a leading registered Angus seedstock operation in the state of Tennessee and surrounding region. Lake is certainly an up-and-coming leader. [He] already is in the Angus breed. He will continue to be in the years to come."

The Foundation's sponsorship of Elliott provides him with the opportunity to expand his knowledge and gain valuable information about the beef industry, Jenkins adds.

Southern roots

Robert Elliott and Sons, a partnership between Elliott, his father and his uncle, calves out about 175 head of registered Angus cows per year, and brings in an additional 25 embryo calves from a cooperator herd, he says. The purebred Angus operation was started in 1935 when Elliott's grandfather graduated from high school. Elliott says artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET) play significant roles in the operation, and he describes Robert Elliott and Sons as "very involved" in use of both technologies. About 60 purebred Angus bulls and 35-40 cow-calf pairs are marketed at an annual production sale hosted on the fourth Monday in February each year.

In addition to the Angus operation, the family grows 25 acres of dark fire-cured tobacco and about 2.5 million greenhouse transplants for tobacco in six greenhouses.

Sponsoring future leaders

The Angus Foundation has sponsored a YCC participant to represent Angus since 2003, making Elliott the 14th Angus breeder to enjoy the opportunity.

"One of the three facets and priorities in the Angus Foundation's mission is

education,” Jenkins says. “This is a platform to be able to fulfill that facet in addition to the Beef Leaders’ Institute, Cattlemen’s Boot Camps and other educational seminars.”

Cody Sankey of Sankey’s 6N Ranch in Council Grove, Kan., now in Economy, Ind., attended last year’s conference through sponsorship of the Angus Foundation. He was elected to return this year as the group’s chairman to provide leadership for this year’s class.

“It’s an honor to be that chairman to come back for the second time,” Sankey says.

Elliott describes the YCC tour as “very much worthwhile,” but adds, “You better have your batteries charged.”

Exploring beef’s impact

It’s an action-packed tour designed to put YCC participants in direct contact with both production and legislation as it relates to the beef industry.

“The experience takes you from pasture to plate, all along the beef supply chain,” says Clint Mefford, American Angus Association director of communications and YCC attendee. “We had the opportunity to connect with a plethora of industry professionals — from feeders to packers to McDonald’s leadership.”

The tour begins at the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) headquarters in Denver, where participants take in a comprehensive overview of the industry. The group is briefed on a number of issues affecting the cattle industry, and how NCBA is addressing those issues on behalf of its members, before receiving an overarching view of market activity from CattleFax.

The group then travels to JBS Five Rivers Kuner Feedyard in northern Colorado, one of the largest cattle-feeding operations in the country with a one-time capacity of more than 100,000 head. The tour moves on to the JBS Greeley packing and processing facility, one of the largest of its kind in the United States.

Following the more production-oriented leg of the tour, the class heads to Chicago, Ill., where participants visit the Chicago



► Angus breeders attending the Young Cattlemen’s Conference this year included (from left) Andrew Stewart, Stewart Select Angus, Greensburg, Ind.; Will Mayfield, Mayfield Angus Farm, Pulaski, Tenn.; Clint Mefford, American Angus Association director of communications, St. Joseph, Mo.; Cody Sankey, Sankey’s 6N Ranch, Economy, Ind.; Lake Elliott, Robert Elliott and Sons, Adams, Tenn.; and Tom McCall, MC Livestock, Greenville, Va.

Board of Trade & OSI Inc., the value-added food company that provides beef patties for McDonald’s sandwiches. From Chicago, the group travels to the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C. In Washington, participants are given the opportunity to meet with their respective congressmen and senators. In addition, the group visits with a number of regulatory agencies that make decisions affecting agriculture, including USDA.

“The real highlight of the trip is, of course, Washington, D.C.,” Mefford says. “My time as a collegiate livestock judging contestant prepared me well as I helped to inform and educate congressmen on topics of importance to cattle producers.”

A humbling experience

“It’s very humbling to be out there as one of only two breeds that send representation (Angus and Simmental),” Elliott says of being chosen to represent Angus breeders at the event. “It’s pretty humbling when you look at how deep our breed is of young, innovative people to be selected.”

Elliott says he had a great group to help share the Angus message at YCC.

“It felt good to know we have such a strong family representing our breed but through different avenues,” he says. “That was really neat.”

Mefford agrees.

“The Angus family was the most heavily represented group in a class of nearly 60 participants. It showcases the leadership role Angus producers embody across the country,” he says. “Angus breeders are passionate, caring and well-educated in the policy issues affecting them. I was humbled to tag along and learn.”

Two things attracted him to the YCC experience, Elliott says: gaining knowledge to return back to fellow breeders and forming new relationships made to help one another with that same purpose.

“I think the greatest takeaway for me was there are a lot of people that have the same interests as I do and are very passionate about what they do,” he says, “and, most importantly, passionate about preserving the future

and making it better for our children and grandchildren.”

That’s despite a media culture that paints agriculture in a negative light, he adds. “It’s not as dim as a lot of people have painted it, but we can’t let up or it can get dim in a hurry.”

Mefford says the friendships developed with classmates were his greatest takeaway.

“You spend hours with these folks over an intense 10-day period,” he says. “They really become a second family. NCBA offers an unrivaled leadership experience through YCC, and the networking is truly the highlight.”

Visiting Washington, D.C., and having face time with senators and congressmen was Sankey’s favorite part of the trip, and being there on behalf of Angus gives a sense of pride.

“It’s a great honor and a pleasure to represent the Angus breed and a group of young Angus breeders at an event like [YCC],” he says. “It’s something you don’t take lightly.”

