



# Girls Gone Social

Social media helps women connect at Auxiliary conference.

Story & photos by **Shelby Mettlen**, assistant editor

In a world fueled by hashtags, tweets, pins, status updates and snapshots, it's not difficult to stay connected. Getting involved in conversation has never been easier; social media has made sure of that. At this year's Women Connected conference in Wooster, Ohio, women from diverse backgrounds across the country came together for a weekend of workshops, joined by two things: a passion for the Angus breed and a hashtag.

Thirty-six women from 17 states across the country gathered at the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Education and Culinary Center (ECC) in Wooster, Ohio, April 2-4 for a weekend of food, fellowship and fun at the third biennial Women Connected conference. First hosted in 2012 at the American Angus Association in Saint Joseph, Mo., the conference aims to educate, empower and bring together a group of enthusiastic, diverse women with a passion for the Angus industry.

This year's conference, chaired by Anne

Lampe of Scott City, Kan., utilized the ECC's state-of-the-art kitchen to play host to a spin-off of the Food Network's popular *Chopped* competition.

The women were split into six groups and given a basket of ingredients centered on a cut of *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand beef. Basket contents ranged from yellow cake mix and chocolate-covered cherries to asparagus and tri-tip roast.

Conference attendees were given an hour and a half to construct a meal worthy of a five-star restaurant with coaching from CAB chefs Ashley Pado, Peter Rosenberg and Tony Biggs. The dishes were then served for lunch and voted on for the "Brand Champion *Chopped*" winner.

In addition to the immensely popular

cooking contest, women took part in cooking demonstrations "Rave about the Roast" with Chef Ashley Pado and "Girls at the Grill" with Chef Peter Rosenberg, learning new and innovative methods of cooking beef. Later, the ladies hopped on a bus and headed for wine tasting and shopping at Troutman Vineyards and Pine Tree Barn just south of Wooster.

Much of the conference's buzz was generated by social media. Lampe made sure everyone took advantage of their social skills during the women's gathering.

## #HowtoSocial

How you use social media matters. To promote use of social media platforms during the conference, Lampe encouraged women to post all of their photos and updates online using the hashtag #AngusWomenConnected. At the end of the conference, names of the women who used the hashtag were placed in a hat and drawn to be the winner of a scarf from the Angus Gift Barn, operated by the Auxiliary and managed by Auxiliary Ways and Means Committee Chairman Christy Perdue.

"The main goal of the conference is to bring together a group of diverse women who share the common bond of Angus cattle," Lampe says. "By encouraging the use of social media during the conference, friends, family, others in the Angus industry and acquaintances could follow along. It creates a greater awareness of the conference, women in ag, the Auxiliary, and our host, Certified Angus Beef."

Angus Auxiliary President Shally Rogen says she used Facebook to connect with women who wanted to attend, but couldn't.

"I wanted them to see what we were experiencing," she says.

Rogen says social media can act as a network for women in the industry to share their stories and support one another.

"The more women in agriculture who share their stories, the more information and support women can provide to each other.

"The information is instant," she continues. "It allows for people to comment, and it can empower agriculture groups to send out accurate and positive information. It can also be seen by so many people with diversified backgrounds, or non-ag. It may open a conversation that

**"It's amazing how we can connect instantly with friends or family members that live far away through the power of these tools."**

— **Stacy Erdmann**



► Thirty-six Angus women from 17 states came together April 2-4 in Wooster, Ohio, to take part in the third Women Connected conference, hosted at Certified Angus Beef LLC's Education & Culinary Center and funded by the Angus Foundation.

they never had an interest in before just by seeing social media.”

### Using different avenues

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest — what's a girl to use? Even with numerous avenues of social communication, Lampe says Facebook holds a strong lead among the Angus women.

“Facebook was by far the most used,” she says. “All of the attendees except two have Facebook accounts, and a few even post on their farm or ranch accounts. A few were on Instagram; only a couple were active on Twitter.”

Rogen says her favorite channel is Facebook; Lampe enjoys sharing information on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; and Stacy Erdmann of Lisbon, N.D., prefers Facebook with Instagram coming in a strong second.

Erdmann shares information via her own personal account, as well as her family's ranch page, Erdmann Angus Ranch — Bar E Feeds.

“We use [our ranch page] to get information out on our bulls and heifers,” she says. “We also use it to help promote our VitaFerm® business.”

Rogen uses Facebook to promote Auxiliary events and deadlines.

“Personally, I'm more likely to click on a cattle sale I see promoted on Facebook than I am to go directly to that person's page and search their sales,” she says.

In addition to using #AngusWomenConnected, Lampe asked that women tag the American Angus Auxiliary and Certified Angus Beef on Facebook, as well as Instagram and Twitter. You can follow and interact with CAB by following them on Instagram and Twitter with the handle @CertAngusBeef.



Shally Rogen

### Posting strategies

As one might imagine, food is pretty popular on CAB's social media sites. Somewhat surprisingly, photos of raw beef trump photos of meals on Facebook and Instagram, said Margaret Coleman, director of digital platforms for CAB, during a presentation on the conference's final day. She added that short, instructional videos gain a great deal of attention, as they allow viewers to see an abbreviated, visual version of a recipe.

Coleman shared some tips for attendees to assist in promoting their farms and ranches on social media. She encouraged posting year-round, not just during sale time, to boost interactions and help page visitors and customers feel involved. Make it personal, she noted, by sharing glimpses into family and ranch life. She encouraged sharing posts from farm and ranch accounts to personal channels to keep business and life separate, but still engage a number of different parties. She also suggested live



► Attendees at this year's Women Connected conference enjoyed entertainment from Cara Ayers (center) of Sweet Home, Ore., at the conference's opening dinner.



► Diana Clark, CAB meat scientist, shows attendees the basic principles of carcass evaluation.

streaming video for auctions and other events.

Most importantly, she stressed, engage. Respond to comments in a timely and professional manner to encourage positive interactions.

### Taking it home

Erdmann has recently taken the initiative

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to restart North Dakota's state Angus Auxiliary organization. After the state's Auxiliary lost its stamina in past years, Erdmann says she recognized a need to get the organization back on its feet. She says using social media is helping her accomplish the task.

"Since we are restarting our Auxiliary in North Dakota, I want to be able to share these experiences and what the American Angus Auxiliary is all about back home," she says. "It's exciting to see what we can do, and I want to bring that excitement back home with me."

"I love being a spokesperson for our way of life to those who have not grown up on the farm or ranch, or around cattle or livestock," she continues. "The more I can show others what we do and that we care to continue to educate ourselves for the better of our livestock, hopefully the more we can help others understand our lifestyle."



► Chef Peter Rosenberg offers grilling tips during his "Girls at the Grill" workshop.



► This year's conference utilized the ECC's state-of-the-art kitchen to play host to a spinoff of the Food Network's popular *Chopped* competition.



► **Above:** Women Connected attendees get a grill-side view of Chef Peter's grilling demonstration.

► **Below:** CAB's Margaret Coleman shares tips for using social media to build your brand.



► "I love being a spokesperson for our way of life to those who have not grown up on the farm or ranch, or around cattle or livestock," says Stacy Erdmann of Lisbon, S.D.



Erdmann and Lampe agree that, if used correctly, social media can be a great tool for agriculture. All said they've never had a negative experience using social media to share their stories.

"It can be a powerful tool — both positively and negatively," Lampe says. "However, I do believe, used to engage in a positive manner, it can be a very positive advocating and educational tool."

Erdmann agrees. "Like anything, you have to be careful with what you post and when," she says. "Our younger generations are on social media every day and they are our future. As we have more and more generations removed from agriculture, social media outlets are easy and cost-effective ways to present our everyday lives to someone in the middle of the city. Although I feel it can't replace the feeling of a true hands-on experience, it's still a way to get our information out."

It's like having instant, perpetual pen pals, Erdmann says.

"It's amazing how we can connect instantly with friends or family members that live far away through the power of these tools," she says.

"Small businesses continue to pop up on these social media outlets; videos and stories of agriculture, and our lifestyles do, too. Many have found it's not scary at all to tell our story. It's become empowering."

Empowering, indeed. The conference's youngest attendee, 24-year-old Bailey Bannister of Kent, N.Y., says the women of the Auxiliary are her role models.

"The women here are so diverse and amazing," she says. "Hearing their stories and how much they do is really inspiring. Most of them are full-time moms and farm wives, and everything they do for the Association and the Auxiliary is really impressive. They're role models to me."

