

by Mark McCully  
CEO, American Angus Association



## Lessons learned while building a brand

*I love telling the story of the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB) brand. I've shared it hundreds of times and truly believe it's one of the greatest success stories in all of agriculture. The history and the accomplishment of CAB has a David-vs.-Goliath feel.*

A producer-owned, not-for-profit, little branded beef program that changed an industry. While it's a feel-good story to tell, the brand's history identifies several leadership lessons.

### **Lesson 1: Leaders are bold and take action.**

Many people know the brand's origin starts with a letter written by Angus breeder Harold Etling of Ohio in 1975. Etling had a bad steak labeled Angus that frustrated him, and he began thinking about how to keep it from happening in the future.

He came up with some great ideas and a well-thought-out strategy. But the key is he didn't just keep his ideas and thoughts to himself. He wrote a letter and shared it with folks who could do something with it — in this case, the Association Board of Directors.

Sometimes it is just that simple.

### **Lesson 2: Leaders think differently and buck the trend when necessary.**

The letter outlined a certification program built on quality and consumer satisfaction. This was at a time when the common industry thinking was about making our product leaner.

### **Lesson 3: Leadership requires tenacity.**

The early years of CAB were very difficult. The Association finances

were tight and program cuts were being made to balance budgets. From 1978 through 1983, specifically, there were spirited debates in the board room about continuing investment for the branded beef project. The program was not generating enough revenue to cover expenses, and some believed those resources should be directed elsewhere. Still, several individuals had a clear and compelling vision about what could be, and they fought to keep the program going.


### **Lesson 4: Leadership requires patience and the fortitude to stay the course.**

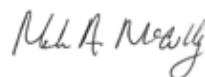
In today's microwaved, instant-gratification world, patience is rare. People don't want to wait for anything, and success is expected immediately. It took five years before the CAB program broke even (a total American Angus Association investment up to that point of \$281,000), nine years before the first grid premiums were paid for a CAB-qualifying carcass, and arguably 20 years before the brand was having a significant and measurable effect on its mission of increasing demand for registered Angus bulls.

### **Lesson 5: Leaders stay true to their convictions and resist lowering their standards for short-term gain.**

Over the brand's history, there were multiple occasions when demand was far greater than supply. More than one conversation took place in the board room about the option of lowering the marbling specification to something easier to reach. This would allow more cattle to qualify, and extra supply would allow the brand to grow in sales. Fortunately, decision-makers involved with the brand never gave in to temptation. They stayed true to the science that defined where the brand specifications should be to delight consumers.

We are blessed as an industry to have so many leaders over the years who believed in the original vision that Etling laid out, stayed committed to building a promise with consumers based on quality and eating satisfaction, and persevered through skepticism and doubt to make the brand what it is today.

Their lessons in leadership are invaluable, and we could all benefit from incorporating many, if not all, into our businesses today. 



[mmccully@angus.org](mailto:mmccully@angus.org)

# STAFF LISTING

## ANGUS JOURNAL®

816-383-5100  
www.AngusJournal.net

Kenny Miller, *interim president*

### EDITORIAL

Julie Mais, *editor*, Angus Journal  
Shauna Hermel, *editor*, Angus Beef Bulletin  
Megan Silveira, *assistant editor*, Angus Journal  
Heather Lassen, *special projects editor*  
Jaime Albers, *senior graphic artist*, Angus Journal  
Leann Schleicher, *graphic artist*, Angus Beef Bulletin  
Mary Black, *part-time graphic artist*, Angus Beef Bulletin  
Kindra Gordon, *field editor*, Whitewood, S.D.  
Becky Mills, *field editor*, Cuthbert, Ga.  
Paige Nelson, *field editor*, Rigby, Idaho  
Troy Smith, *field editor*, Sargent, Neb.

### ADVERTISING

Jacque McGinness, *advertising team leader*, circulation coordinator  
Kathy LaScala, *corporate sales manager*  
Kaysie Wiederholt, *senior coordinator/graphic artist*  
Liz Schulz, *coordinator/graphic artist*  
Ryann Kats, *coordinator/graphic artist*  
Jen Gregory, *proofreader*

### PRINT SERVICES

Gail Lombardino, *print media team leader*  
Sharon Mayes, *senior coordinator*  
Rachel Witt, *senior coordinator*  
Brooke Vincent, *coordinator*  
Jenna Kauzlarich, *senior coordinator/graphic artist*  
Julie Murnin, *senior coordinator/graphic artist*  
Susan Bomar, *coordinator/graphic artist*  
Grace Sanburg, *coordinator/graphic artist*  
Kim Tibken, *coordinator/graphic artist*  
Melissa Cozzitorto, *proofreader*  
Sue Kauzlarich, *proofreader*  
Ashley Petty, *billing analyst*

### WEB SERVICES

Andy Blumer, *web services team leader*  
Bruce Buntin, *coordinator*  
Lauren Hitch, *designer*  
Mike Nolting, *frontend developer*

### DIGITAL SERVICES

Miranda Reiman, *director of digital content and strategy*, Cozad, Neb.  
Mackenzie Brewer, *digital specialist*  
Hannah Frobose, *senior digital specialist*  
Cate Doubet, *digital specialist*  
Bailey Cole, *senior marketing specialist*  
Rayne Wilson, *digital marketing specialist*

### PHOTO SERVICES

Kathrin Gresham, *coordinator*

### API BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Barry Pollard, *chairman*  
Mark McCully, *vice chairman*  
Kenny Miller, *interim president, secretary-treasurer*  
John Dickinson  
Greg McCurry  
Jonathan Perry  
Darrell Stevenson  
Jerry Theis  
Darius Lane, *industry rep*

For more detailed contact information, access the "contact" tab on the top navigation bar at [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org).

## AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION®

3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997; phone: 816-383-5100; fax: 816-233-9703  
Office hours: (M-F) 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Central); home page: [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org)

### ADMINISTRATION

Mark McCully, *CEO*  
Lou Ann Adams, *CIO*  
Kenny Miller, *CFO*  
Bethany Kelly, *vice president, human resources and talent development*  
Martha Greer, *coordinator of board relations*

### DEPARTMENT LEADERS

Tara Adwell, *director, finance*  
Caitlyn Brandt, *director, events and junior activities*  
Jerry Cassidy, *director, member services*  
Hannah Persell, *member experience lead*  
Troy Marshall, *director, commercial industry relations*  
Holly Martin, *director, communications*  
Esther Tarpoff, *director, performance programs*  
Thomas Medsker, *director, information systems*

### COMMUNICATIONS

Sharla Huseman, *communications manager*  
Briley Richard, *communications specialist*  
Peyton Schmitt, *communications specialist*  
Whitney Whitaker, *communications specialist*  
Max Stewart, *senior creative manager*  
Donald Korthanke, *production manager*  
Lea Ann Maudlin, *photo coordinator*  
Amber Wahlgren, *assistant*

### REGIONAL MANAGERS

David Gazda, *director, field services*  
(see page 102 for a complete listing)

### 2023 BOARD OFFICERS

Chuck Grove, *president*; Virginia; phone: 816-390-6600; [chuckgrove64@hotmail.com](mailto:chuckgrove64@hotmail.com)  
Barry Pollard, *vice president*; Oklahoma; phone: 580-541-1022; [barry@pollardfarms.com](mailto:barry@pollardfarms.com)  
Jonathan Perry, *treasurer*, Tennessee; cell: 931-703-6330; [jjperry@deervalleyfarm.com](mailto:jjperry@deervalleyfarm.com)

## CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF LLC

206 Riffel Rd., Wooster, OH 44691-8588; 330-345-2333; fax: 330-345-0808; [www.CABcattle.com](http://www.CABcattle.com)

John Stika, *president*

Brent Eichar, *senior executive vice president, operations and finance*

Bruce Cobb, *executive vice president, production*

Tracey Erickson, *executive vice president, marketing*

Steve Ringle, *executive vice president, business development*

### SUPPLY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Marilyn Conley, *administrative assistant*  
Kara Lee, *director, producer engagement*, Leavenworth, Kan.

Paul Dykstra, *director, supply management and analysis*, Chappell, Neb.

Kirsten Nickles, *sustainability and animal care scientist*

### PRODUCER COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Lindsay Graber Runft, *director, producer communications*  
Morgan Marley Boecker, *communications manager*

## AMERICAN ANGUS AUXILIARY OFFICERS

[www.angusauxiliary.com](http://www.angusauxiliary.com)

Julie Conover, *president*  
Karla Knapp, *president-elect*  
Tonya Theis, *secretary-treasurer*  
Deanna Hofing, *past president*

### 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terms expiring in 2023 — Mark Ahearn, *Texas*; cell: 972-742-7789; [tmranch@aol.com](mailto:tmranch@aol.com) • Smitty Lamb, *Georgia*; cell: 229-646-4785; [smittylamb@hotmail.com](mailto:smittylamb@hotmail.com) • Charles Mogck, *South Dakota*; cell: 605-661-4562; [mogckcl@gwtc.net](mailto:mogckcl@gwtc.net) • Darrell Stevenson, *Montana*; cell: 406-350-5443; [stevenson.darrell@yahoo.com](mailto:stevenson.darrell@yahoo.com) • Gerald Theis, *Kansas*; cell: 913-683-0775; [jerrytonyathais@gmail.com](mailto:jerrytonyathais@gmail.com)

Terms expiring in 2024 — Paul Bennett, *Virginia*; cell: 434-941-8245; [knollcrest@knollcrestfarm.com](mailto:knollcrest@knollcrestfarm.com) • Jim Brinkley, *Missouri*; phone: 660-265-5565; [brinkleyangus@nemr.net](mailto:brinkleyangus@nemr.net) • John Dickinson, *California*; cell: 916-806-1919; [john@parnelldickinson.com](mailto:john@parnelldickinson.com) • Greg McCurry, *Kansas*; cell: 316-772-7856; [mccurrybro@aol.com](mailto:mccurrybro@aol.com) • Lorán B. Wilson, *Indiana*; cell: 812-653-0018; [lbwilson1025@gmail.com](mailto:lbwilson1025@gmail.com)

Terms expiring in 2025 — Rob Adams, *Alabama*; cell: 334-202-3454; [adamsangus@gmail.com](mailto:adamsangus@gmail.com) • Art Butler, *Idaho*; phone: 208-280-1026; [springcoveranch1919@gmail.com](mailto:springcoveranch1919@gmail.com) • Alan Mead, *Missouri*; cell: 573-216-0210; [meadangus@yahoo.com](mailto:meadangus@yahoo.com) • Henry Smith, *Kentucky*; cell: 606-271-7520; [bmsmith@duo-county.com](mailto:bmsmith@duo-county.com) • Roger Wann, *Oklahoma*; cell: 940-727-8492; [rogerawann@gmail.com](mailto:rogerawann@gmail.com)

### INDUSTRY BOARD MEMBERS

CAB Board, Dwight 'Kip' Palmer, *Palmer Food Services, New York*  
Angus Foundation Board, Larry Gossen  
API Board, Darius Lane

### AT LARGE

Angus Foundation Board, Darla Eggers, *Missouri*  
Angus Foundation Board, Tom McGinnis, *Kentucky*

## ANGUS FOUNDATION

[www.angusfoundation.org](http://www.angusfoundation.org)

Jaclyn Boester, *executive director*  
Kris Sticken, *administrative assistant*

## ANGUS GENETICS INC.

[www.angus.org/AGI/](http://www.angus.org/AGI/)

Kelli Retallick-Riley, *president*  
André Garcia, *geneticist*

## NATIONAL JUNIOR ANGUS BOARD

[www.njaa.info](http://www.njaa.info)

### TERMS UP IN 2023

J. Gordon Clark, *Virginia*, *vice chairman*  
Kathryn Coleman, *California*, *events director*  
Kinsey Crowe, *Ohio*, *communications director*  
Avery Dull, *Maryland*, *education director*  
Marcie Harward, *North Carolina*, *Foundation director*  
Nicole Stevenson, *Montana*, *chairman*

### TERMS UP IN 2024

Jayce Dickerson, *Kansas*  
Jack Dameron, *Illinois*  
Lauren Gilbert, *Missouri*  
Lani LeBeouf, *Louisiana*  
Avery Mather, *Iowa*  
Colter Pohlman, *Texas*