

All In

When Rick and Leslie Mindemann got into the Angus business, they went all in, actively participating in Angus activities on multiple levels. Leslie serves as the 2018 American Angus Auxiliary president.

by Ali Luetz, American Angus Association

In true Wisconsin fashion, Leslie Mindemann and her husband, Rick Mindemann, brave a snowstorm to check calves on a cold day in February. The single-digit temperatures and snow-covered ground don't bother the two; they've been doing this for a while.

Their operation runs smoothly thanks to more than 25 years of experience raising Angus cattle. Although the two have passed on many responsibilities to their sons, Andy and Aric, Leslie and Rick still remain active on their 120-cow Angus operation.

Yet, the Mindemann farm hasn't always been such a well-oiled machine.

A learning curve

The Mindemanns didn't grow up with Angus cattle. Rick grew up on the home farm, which included a small dairy operation and crop production. After returning from military service, he worked to develop a nationwide trucking operation as a family business. With his background growing up on the



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farm, country life called and was a gift he wanted for his children.

Leslie grew up with little exposure to farm life.

"My first experience with the farm was visiting a relative in Indiana when I was a child," she says. "Living in the country with animals to care for had a romance to it."

In 1971, Leslie met Rick during a college spring-break trip. The two were married just a few years later and, by 1980, Rick's family trucking business was a bustling operation.

When the opportunity arose in 1989 to purchase an acreage near Sullivan, Wis., the couple couldn't

say no. Their three boys, Aric, Andy (twins) and Jason were ages 12 and 14, respectively, and Rick knew it was time they experienced life on the farm.

Despite having next to no cattle experience, Leslie and Rick decided they wanted to get into the beef cattle business. With the help of local breeders, the two decided on Angus.

"Meeting with Paul May, Fernvale Angus, we were really impressed with their cattle, operation and family story," Leslie

says. "We purchased 15 bred heifers from their herd. Jan Radcliffe, S&R Angus, had an impressive Angus operation with strong genetics, so 10 bred heifers rounded out the start of Mindemann Farms."

Once calving season rolled around, the couple and their hired hand, Ron Meyer, realized they had a steep learning curve ahead of them. The crew got a dose of reality despite working hard to set up for a smooth calving season. Helping 25 heifers deliver their first calf was no small task for all three first-timers.

"A heifer began calving in the lot with the calf appearing to be hip-

locked,” Leslie says, recounting a story from that first year on Mindemann Farms. “Rick suggested I distract the heifer while he pulled the calf. Distract I did, as she butted me up and over the gate!”

Nevertheless, mistakes make a great teacher, and the first year with cattle taught Leslie and Rick a lot. They found out pulling a calf wasn’t always necessary, and opening the barn door to check on calving often just delayed the process.

Through the years, they learned when to be their own veterinarian and when to throw in the towel and call the professional. Lucky for them, their veterinarian served as a teacher to the young entrepreneurs, offering advice and helping with calving and herd health.

Dedication to the breed

After a year on the farm, the couple and their three kids trucked south to the Illinois Beef Expo, where the Mindemann family made their debut showing cattle.

“At that first show, I really felt like we were country bumpkins. We had no idea what we were doing,” Leslie says.

Next up was the 1991 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Milwaukee. Their son Jason took home reserve champion Angus steer honors. That’s all it took for the Mindemanns to catch “the show bug.”



Though she grew up with little exposure to farm life, Leslie Mindemann is devoted to advocating about beef.

They jumped right in and got involved with the Wisconsin Junior Angus Association (WJAA) shortly after their kids started showing.

“Angus folks are very friendly and helpful, so it was easy to become active in the WJAA,” Leslie says. “Early on we were junior advisors preparing for shows, offering financial direction, creating activities for the kids.”

That was just the beginning of Leslie and her family’s long history serving the Angus breed.



Rick and Leslie Mindemann have a long history serving the Angus breed.

Rick, Leslie and Andy took turns serving as Wisconsin Angus Association president. From 1992-2000, Rick and Leslie served as WJAA advisors. When Wisconsin hosted the 2002 NJAS, Leslie chaired the event, and Rick served as fundraising chair.

Leslie has an impressive record serving in the Wisconsin and

American Angus Auxiliary. Since the early 1990s she’s been active with the Wisconsin Angus Auxiliary, serving in officer positions and has served on the Wisconsin Angus Auxiliary Board of Directors, and as president in 2008.

In fall of 2008, she joined the first team of regional directors for the American Angus Auxiliary. She dedicated her time to the position for five years, and in 2015, she started the Auxiliary’s four-year officer rotation. As secretary, treasurer, vice president

and now president of the organization, Leslie has been supportive on all levels.

“I think the relationship between the Auxiliary and Angus youth has been a passion of mine, and I think that’s why I’ve stayed involved all this time,” she explains.

An ambitious auxiliary

With more than 900 members, the American Angus Auxiliary does a lot to support Angus youth.

The Auxiliary got its start

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Junior show projects exposed the Mindemanns to more of the Angus industry, where they took a leadership role within their state and national organizations.

giving out scholarships in the 1950s. Then, the Miss American Angus program, which is celebrating 50 years, took shape. As the Auxiliary continued to evolve, programs were added to accompany a growing NJAS. Youth support remains the common thread and core mission across every program the organization coordinates.

However, the Auxiliary also works to support the membership through the Women Connected conference, the newly launched mentorship program and regional directors.

“I think that’s [regional directors] been a fantastic project for the development for the Auxiliary because it makes a connection between the national level and the state,” Leslie says.

As Auxiliary president, Leslie has a lot in store for 2018.

“I think we’ll expand and become



Leslie has been active with the Wisconsin Angus Auxiliary since the 1990s. She has served the American Angus Auxiliary since 2008, serving as regional director for five years before starting the Auxiliary’s four-year officer rotation.

even stronger supporting women in agriculture,” she explains. “We are working toward becoming better advocates. I think that’s where the

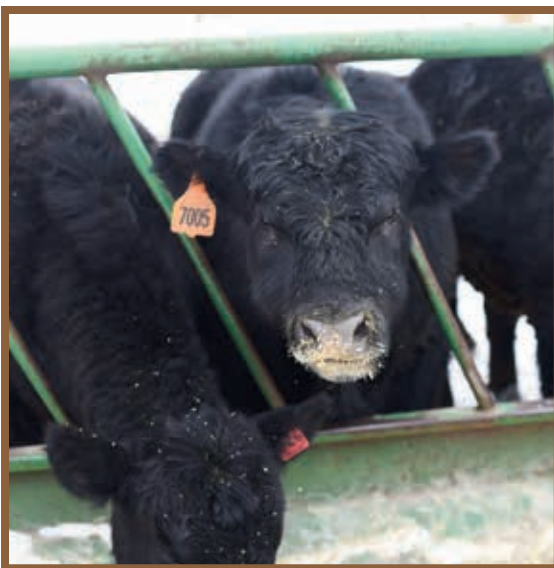
regional directors can play a good part to help states play a more expansive role in the agriculture market.”

She wants Auxiliary members to be active champions of beef in their everyday life. Setting the example, when Leslie visited her dentist recently, she pitched to him the many benefits of lean beef.

She might not have convinced him to buy a steak, but she knows promoting beef and the agriculture industry are essential. Who better to teach others about beef than beef producers themselves?

“We are consumers and we are cooks. I think using beef in your daily diet is something that we can all certainly advocate for,” Leslie says. **AJ**

Editor’s Note: Ali Luety is a communications specialist for the American Angus Association.



Mindemann believes agriculturalists should be at the forefront in agriculture advocacy.