

Branding the Skies

An Angus Foundation supporter from a surprising place.

by Chloe Fowler and Rachel Robinson, American Angus Association

A plane flies overhead. Nothing unusual in our world of high-velocity travel; however, when peering closer, the side of the plane has an image, and it is not one of typical high-altitude travel brands. This brand is often found in grocery stores and restaurants — not casually flying above. It is the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand in the clouds.

The plane belongs to Dwight (Kip) Palmer, the man behind Palmer Foods of Rochester, N.Y. and G&C Food Services in Syracuse, N.Y. Palmer doesn't work for CAB; he just believes deeply in the quality of the product and the major influence it has, both past and present, with the beef industry and consumers alike.

"When you walk into Palmer Foods, the only place with more CAB logos is our office," says John Stika, CAB president. "It comes back to how

committed he and his companies are to CAB. The brand is always a focus and at the very least, an undertone for everything he does."

CAB began in 1978 and just celebrated its 40th anniversary. The brand itself is synonymous with quality because of the level of taste and high standards.

"The product we're producing is superior to anything else on the market," Palmer says.

Doing what's right

From the very beginning, Palmer Foods was on the scene, seeing the good a product like this would bring. Starting in the seafood business in 1850 and then entering into the meat side of things in 1980, Palmer Foods

is a fifth-generation business.

As the oldest family-owned-and-operated food distributor in

the country, the company grew by the acquisition of other specialty distributors as well as by organic growth.

"Kip's businesses have been very successful and are still based on family values," says Mark Polzer, vice

president of business development for CAB. "He's a Christian man, and a straightforward and honest individual. If asked what's the most important thing to his business, Kip would say employees."

Palmer's dedication to integrity is why Polzer put his name forward for the outside representative for the CAB Board of Directors.

"The thing that stuck in my mind about Kip is he's not just going to do what's right for him, but also for the industry and consumer," Polzer says. "I knew he'd come with an unbiased communication about what's right for the industry."

Polzer's recommendation turned out to be a good one, and Palmer has served two three-year terms.

"I am not from the agricultural production industry but did grow up in the food distribution business," Palmer says.

Nevertheless, he has affected the



CAB President John Stika commends Kip Palmer's commitment to the brand. Even his plane brands the skies with a painted CAB logo.

beef industry and Angus breed as a whole through his service on the CAB Board and his generosity to the Angus Foundation and Colvin Scholarship fund.

“Kip has been extremely generous in his donations to the Angus Foundation,” Polzer says. “No one ever approached him about giving. It just came from his heart.”

His dollars aren’t the only things making an impact on the Angus breed. His perspective on the CAB Board has been invaluable. As the first licensed distributor serving as an industry representative on the Board, he has provided a perspective unlike any others coming before him. In the past, packers have been the main industry representatives, leaving out a major sector of the travel from pasture to plate.

“Kip really fulfills what an outside representative is supposed to,” Stika says. “He challenges our perspectives, gives insight into consumers and his side of the business, and he lives it every day. It’s been phenomenal to expand our perspective, and as a fifth-generation, family business, he relates well to our Board because of those similarities.”

Giving back

It isn’t just CAB and American Angus Association staff who recognize Palmer’s value. In a special vote at the September Board meeting, Palmer was allotted the unique opportunity to serve another three-year term. Normally, outside representatives only serve two three-year terms. Palmer is the first exception to this rule. He holds the Board in the same high regard.

“The Board members I serve with are servant leaders,” Palmer says. “They are passionate about the Angus

breed, their livelihoods, and they try to serve others with what they do.”

“Kip really fulfills what an outside representative is supposed to. He challenges our perspectives, gives insight into consumers and his side of the business, and he lives it every day.”

— John Stitka

Their true passion and commitment to the industry and the future of the Angus breed led Palmer to become even more involved in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and Angus Foundation. He is a member of the Colvin Scholarship Committee and continues to engage with the NJAA.

Many may wonder why someone who did not grow up in production agriculture has found such a desire to work with and support those who wish to pursue careers in it. However, Palmer looks beyond the industry as a business and sees the culture behind those who wish to continue a livelihood in the beef industry:

the focus on family, community and the next generation. These things have been driving forces in his involvement with the beef industry and CAB.

For a man who has been successful in his business and has a family legacy in the food distribution business, he truly wishes to remain humble and give back.

“In life, you have to give back,” Palmer says. “God has truly blessed me in my life, and it is our company’s responsibility to give back to those we hold dear. The American Angus Association is one I hold dear. The mission of the Angus Foundation and how it’s involved in research to provide the best possible beef that this country can produce, coupling with the scholarships to promote the opportunities to attend college, makes it truly special.” **AJ**

Editor’s note: Chloe Fowler is a former American Angus Association communications intern.



2018-19 CAB Board of Directors (back row, from left) are: Mick Varilek, South Dakota; Kip Palmer, New York; James Henderson, Texas; John Grimes, Ohio; Mike McCravy, Georgia; and Jonathon Perry, Tennessee. Also serving on the Board (front row, from left) are: John F. Stitka, CAB president; Gerald Connealy, chairman, Nebraska; and Allen Moczygamba, American Angus Association CEO and Board vice chairman.