

CATTLE CULTURE

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

Historic Industry, Fresh Faces

The long-term success of the agriculture industry depends on gaining new members.

As a reader of the *Angus Journal*, you're often surrounded by an amazing showing of youth members due in part to the strength in our National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). So, it might be difficult to believe that the agriculture industry as a whole is struggling to bring in younger people.

As of the 2017 Census of Agriculture, U.S. farmers averaged 57.5 years of age. Last year, one-third of this country's 3.4 million farmers were over the age of 65.

What do these numbers mean? The agriculture industry is not doing all it can to draw in the next generation and convincing them to stay.

You see, it's a two-step equation. We need to help younger people find their place in the industry and help them feel welcome to the point where they want to find a career as an agriculturist. That average age won't be lowered if we don't bring in fresh faces or if they don't call agriculture home.

Young and hungry

Younger members in an industry ensure its ability to last through generations. With the population predicted to hit an all-time high of

9.9 billion by 2050, beef producers and our fellow agriculturists need to make sure our industry will be strong enough to feed those hungry people.

So what can we as the Business Breed do to help promote the longevity of this entire industry?

First, we need to encourage more of

our youth to pursue opportunities in the agriculture industry that lead to jobs. From summers spent out in the field working with production agriculturists to internships that embrace all segments of the industry, we need to continue opening the door to younger generations.

Luckily for us as Angus breeders, the American Angus Association has several amazing internship opportunities. Just this year the internship program with our breed expanded, offering a position working alongside the regional managers.

Even as the largest registered breed association in the beef business, there are only a handful of positions open. What about the rest of our NJAA members?

There are many other internship opportunities available — and I mean many. While it's easy for us to stay focused on the love we have for

our black-hided cattle, I think there is great knowledge to be gained by reaching outside of your comfort zone to learn.

I also encourage established producers to seek out more fresh faces to help them over the summer. These summer positions become more of an opportunity to showcase agriculture work than just a hired hand for a few months.

Fresh future

While it's easy to think our work as producers focuses solely on producing a high-quality product for our consumers, it turns out that we have to sell ourselves and our work to more than just those unfamiliar with the industry.

We have to sell it to the fresh faces. They are more than just bright-eyed individuals with new ways of looking at problems we think we have the perfect solution for. They are the future of this industry, and we owe it to the future of this planet to help them understand why we love the work we do. **AJ**

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