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## Coming and going

*Willie Nelson once said, "I believe that all roads lead to the same place ..." I've learned over the years that's pretty much the case.*

In 2012, I was living in New Jersey and working for Pfizer Animal Health as the beef segment marketing director. That March, my manager asked me to conduct an interview of a young man who had recently graduated from Clemson University and was looking for his first job.

While it was routine to conduct interviews, this one was different for a couple of reasons. First, while he had a degree in animal science, he'd grown up in New Jersey, the son of a Manhattan stock broker and the manager of a ballet company.

Second, while he didn't grow up in the industry, he was different in another way. Like most farm kids, he had a great work ethic and was respectful and humble, almost to a fault. However, unlike most recent college grads, he wasn't nervous or too full of himself. Instead, he had a quiet confidence that was palatable. While we didn't have a spot available for him, I knew that some organization was going to get a very talented employee.

A little over six years later, that young man, Chris Engel, was named as the director of the Association's Angus Link™ program. As one might expect, he's still respectful and humble and, yes, he still has that quiet confidence about him that stood out on that morning in New Jersey.

But, after working for two of the largest companies in the industry, he's gained a significant amount of business and management experience to go along with his natural skills and abilities. While his "road" to the Association was different than most, he's the right



*Leota Wilson (right) was celebrated by the staff for her 38 years of service to the American Angus Association.*

person to lead the Angus Link program. We're fortunate he joined the Angus family.

### Retirement

Shortly after Chris came on board, we celebrated the retirement of Leota Wilson, and recognized her 38 years of dedication to the Association.

Leota joined the Association Nov. 12, 1979, as an accountant. It was a transitional time at the Association. While business had been declining for about 10 years as measured by registrations, we were beginning a historic expansion with the creation

of the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand, the Angus Foundation and the purchase of the *Angus Journal*.

Over the years, Leota performed almost every job in the accounting department. She never shirked away from a task, and her attention to detail was remarkable. She would spend hours looking for a few cents whenever the smallest discrepancy appeared in a financial statement. Her technical knowledge, work ethic and problem-solving abilities were key attributes that she brought to the accounting department of the Association.

In recent years she was involved in payroll and human resource functions of the company. She was always a huge advocate for every employee. She would go above and beyond what was expected for anyone; no matter how long they had worked at the Association. Most of all, she was kind.

On Thursday, May 10, every employee in the building stood and applauded Leota as she exited for the last time. As Willie says, all roads do lead to the same place. It's just a matter of timing.

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