

The Future is Bright

The American Angus Association and Agriculture Future of America are helping pass the torch to future generations of agriculturists.

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

Some find themselves most at home surrounded by a herd of cattle. Others enjoy walking the rows of a sow barn. Another portion prefers the silence of row crops.

Yet, one thing they all have in common — a passion for the agriculture industry.

The American Angus Association and Agriculture Future of America (AFA) share the goal of not only educating others about the work of the industry, but also cultivating that inborn love for the industry in younger generations.

“Both of these groups serve a huge purpose in the agriculture industry as



being leaders in innovation and growth,” says Madi Baughman, recent graduate of Oklahoma State University and current freelance writer and photographer.

Baughman spent the summer of 2020 working as an intern for Angus Media in Saint Joseph, Mo., and has been engaged with AFA since her junior year of college. She says both groups have been instrumental in

spreading the beauty of agricultural work and helping young people find their path in the industry.

“I believe the selflessness of both organizations to serve producers and those who invest in them is truly unmatched,” Baughman explains.

Future-focused

Lillian Bowen, AFA development coordinator and alum, says, “AFA builds bridges for young leaders to foster engagement and innovation in food and agriculture. We’re here to build transformational leaders in food and agriculture.”

In addition to developing those leaders, Bowen says AFA also promotes professionalism, intellectualism and entrepreneurialism through leader and career development experiences.

Lindsay Humphrey, former assistant editor of the *Angus Journal* and four-year participant of AFA programs, says the organization exists to promote agriculture and engagement that connects young professionals with all areas of the industry. From leadership training and conferences to institutes centering on topics like governmental policies and plant and animal science, Humphrey says AFA exposes its members to tangible experiences within the agriculture industry.

As a whole, Humphrey says AFA values quality individuals with



The American Angus Association and Agriculture Future of America work to equip their members with the skills need to promote the agricultural industry. The Association hosted a group of young agriculturists at Angus headquarters.

a dedication to working hard, regardless of their level of former experience with agriculture.

“They very much appreciate diversity in people, career avenues, backgrounds, anything,” she adds.

Baughman says AFA helps young individuals fall in love with agriculture. By putting college students in close contact with industry professionals, she says AFA helps these young agriculturists connect the dots between their dreams in the industry and actual career paths.

AFA is entering its 25th year, and Bowen says the organization has not once wavered in its dedication to agricultural youth.

When Bowen attended AFA’s Leaders Conference in 2014, she says she was able to both make lifelong friends and learn about various aspects of the agriculture industry.

For these same reasons, Baughman says she was easily convinced to become more involved with AFA after her attendance to Leaders Conference. As a member of the organization’s Student Advisory Team, Baughman got to take her experience with helping future powerhouses in agriculture a step further by creating opportunities where they could find their voice.

“In this role, I was able to plan and facilitate AFA events, including our annual Leaders Conference,” Baughman explains.

Humphrey believes the conference helps budding agriculturists make the jump into the work force, providing the skills and knowledge needed to build a strong talent pool like acing an interview or composing a strong résumé, while also teaching students to believe in both their own future and the future of the industry.



The Executive Panel from the 2019 Animal Institute provided AFA members with industry insight. Pictured (from left) are Justin Sexten, Performance Livestock Analytics; Jennifer Horn, Cargill; Dan Thompson, Iowa State University; Chris Stallo, American Angus Association; and Jesper Nordengaarden, Hill’s Pet Nutrition.

Cattle calling

The American Angus Association might be focused specifically on a single breed of beef cattle, but Humphrey says they possess the same passion and dedication to their members that AFA does its participants.

“The Association is promoting working hard, sharing in your success, and really trying to move people forward in the industry and make them an asset to agriculture,” she explains.

Through a focus on junior Angus members with the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), Humphrey says the Association has its own unique way of shaping minds and providing both education and connections.

The NJAA is geared toward young Angus enthusiasts learning to find their voice in the agriculture

industry. Humphrey says through the showing of livestock or participation in various events, the youth activities of the NJAA reflect the same type of work being done at various AFA conferences and events.

While AFA is known for the Leaders Conference, Caitlyn Brandt, events and industry partnership manager at the Association, says Angus youth are offered programs like the Raising the Bar conference, Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference, Angus Convention and more.

“The goals of our department are events and education for juniors and adults,” Brandt says. “If we can provide a platform to continue building their knowledge — not just about the Angus breed and industry, but the whole agriculture industry — in a fun and interactive way at

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events and other experiences, we are doing our jobs.”

Brandt says the Angus team strives to take their younger members out of a classroom or lecture setting and allow them to learn through hands-on experiences and relationships with their peers.

Brandt was involved with AFA during her own college career, and she says she consistently sees an alignment between the goals of both organizations. She says the groups bring young agriculturists with varying backgrounds together to learn from each other and mentors.

Catering to all young minds, the Association also offers a variety of internship positions. From communications and media to regional manager duties and even genetics, these internships appeal to a variety of young people and their varying interests.

Even outside the college age bracket, Baughman says the American Angus Association works to promote education of its members. Offering two print publications, the *Angus Journal* and the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, along with a variety of web newsletters, social media outreach and even audio bites, she says the Association is constantly connecting cattlemen with the latest news.

“I believe these publications serve as a vital connection for producers to industry, innovation and research,” Baughman says. “With articles about everything from breed association information to the new and innovative technologies within the industry, these publications are a huge asset to producers who want to lead in herd management and efficiency.”

Whether people are new to agriculture, purchasing their first

heifer or a longtime member of the industry, Humphrey says the resources offered by the Association are a leading source of information for all Angus breeders.

Reproduction, nutrition, technology and producer spotlights are just a few of the topics covered by the Association in their outreach to Angus members.

To the next generation

“There’s a lot of crossover between these two organizations,” Humphrey says. “They’re a really good pairing, between the American Angus Association and AFA.”


She says the two groups are incredibly focused on agriculture. While AFA’s mission may be a bit broader, both programs work to perpetuate the entire agriculture industry. Both organizations are made up of individuals with similar goals — keeping the love for the work of this industry burning brightly for generations to come.

Bowen says the two are focused firmly on the future. She says AFA and the Association want to provide a future built around growth, maturity, innovation and the ability to overcome challenges as the industry enters new chapters.

“I am so incredibly thankful to have had the opportunity to serve both organizations over the past year,” Baughman says. “I have met so many influential people and some of my best friends through the experiences I have had. I have nothing but love and thankfulness for my Angus and AFA families.” **AJ**

Editor’s note: For more information about Agriculture Future of America, visit www.agfuture.org.

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