

Meet Your Staff

Editor's note: As part of our "Family Ties" theme this summer and fall, we want to introduce you to your Association family—those here at the American Angus Association dedicated to giving you the best service in the seedstock industry.

We asked Lance Ziesch to survey staff members to gain insights as to what each does for you, the membership, and why they work for the Association. As with any family, some members enjoy sharing while others are quite shy, so listings will vary in length and detail.

We also asked staff to contribute tips we could give you to help in the Association's goal of constantly improving member services.

We hope you enjoy getting acquainted with the staff—maybe even putting a face to a voice you've heard on the phone for years. We also hope this series will be helpful in directing you to the appropriate person to handle your requests.

In Part 1 of the series, meet the staff who greet you at the front doors, as well as those who handle registrations, data entry and membership.

Receptionists

Susan Arrow, 1 year
Association receptionist

Responsibilities: Answers the phone, arranges conference calls, locates phone numbers for different departments, greets visitors and helps departments with mailings and other tasks.

Susan says that people enjoy talking to a live voice and not a recording when they call into the Association. She says she enjoys it, too. "I get to talk to people from all over the United States and other countries."

Outside the office, Susan likes to spend time with her husband and family. She has three children: two sons, ages 21 and 18, and a daughter, 16. She also has a stepson and stepdaughter, ages 18 and 16, respectively.

Lauralee West, 23 years
API receptionist/office assistant
12 years with American Angus Association
11 years with API

Responsibilities: Answers phones, takes messages, sorts and delivers mail, coordinates shipping and receiving, orders office supplies, bills special requests, photos, FedEx, UPS and USPS shipping, etc.; oversees cleaning service, fax machine, copiers, greets visitors, gives tours, and charts various items.

"My father owned a dairy in Kansas City



Often the first to greet you are Susan Arrow (left) and Lauralee West.

when I was a child," she says. "And I worked with my parents in their livestock-feed-manufacturing and wholesale-distribution company later on for several years."

"I truly enjoy dealing with people in agriculture. They are, for the most part, very sincere, honest, 'salt of the earth' people," she says.

Lauralee is married and has one married daughter, Michelle. She is the grandparent of three boys: Austin, Houston and Tyler; and one girl, Kaitlyn.

Registration Department

Donald R. Painter, 44 years
Director of member services & office manager

Responsibilities: Handles office management and human resources, handles disputes between breeders, administers the Association's blood-typing and genetic programs, works with the regional managers handling breeder problems, coordinates maintenance and repair of Association building and grounds, and schedules work through the office.

Don says handling last-minute requests are the most challenging aspects of his job. Making sure breeders have their certificates before the show is the most rewarding, he says.

Don jokes that one of the Association's past presidents referred to him as the "mortician," which was a remark he didn't understand at first. "His reply was 'sooner or later, you get them all!'"

"I have given this job my best shot," he says.

Donna Holmes, 42 years
Assistant office manager & registration supervisor

Responsibilities: Supervises entire office; immediate supervisor in registration department; responsible for hiring general office employees; handles problems of Angus breeders, regional managers and anyone else with questions addressing rules and regulations concerning registrations and transfers of Angus cattle; supervises building maintenance.

One of Donna's favorite aspects of working at the Association is visiting with Angus breeders from all over the United States and helping them with their problems. "Angus breeders are special and very complimentary of our service," she says. However, there are challenges, too. Helping a boy or girl get their animal registered at the last minute for shows is sometimes difficult, she says.

Donna grew up on a farm in Nodaway County, Mo., near Maryville. They raised registered dairy cows and commercial

CONTINUED ON PAGE 378



Staffing the Registrations Department are (front row, from left) Shirley Holland, Sandy Cole, Donna Holmes, Debbie Groce, Peggy Richardson, (back row, from left) Rose Mary Hoyt, Carol Waller and Marcia Roberts. Not pictured is Don Painter.

cattle. "We did not have milking machines, so I learned very early how to milk cows while their tails smacked me in the head and how to wash the separator (all 32 discs). I think I decided then I wanted to live in the city."

Donna and her husband, Don, have been married 41 years.

"Mr. Painter hired me 42 years ago and has taught me every aspect of this work," she says about her employment. "I started back when we hand-typed transfer information on the back of registration certificates when an animal changed ownership. So you can see we have changed systems several times. We have survived them all."

"I should probably start thinking about retirement, but the American Angus Association has been my life. It will be very hard for me to adjust."

Sandy Cole, 4 years
Checker/secretary

Responsibilities: Corresponds with breeders by phone, fax or mail regarding applications for registration, artificial insemination (AI) certificates, transfers of animals or general rules of the Association.

"My job is to answer, as completely and satisfactorily as possible, any questions a member (or nonmember) may have," she says. "I also handle requests for mailing labels."

Sandy says she likes talking to breeders and solving their problems, no matter how big or small.

Sandy has lived on a small farm (two

or three cows, chickens and rabbits) for most of her life. She shared a custom-harvesting business with her ex-husband while they were married. Her ex-husband's family continues to raise registered and commercial Angus.

The mother of two teenagers, she attends college classes two nights a week, majoring in criminal justice. She is getting close to completing her degree.

Sandy says, "The Association is only as successful as it is because of the people—both breeders and employees. The breeders inspire us to do the best we can, and our leadership inspires us here in the office to be the best at what we do."

Tips for Better Service

- Don't wait until the last moment to send in your work, especially when registering show animals.
- When faxing information, indicate the number of pages you are faxing on the cover sheet. This is helpful because the Association knows how many pages to expect.
- Have your membership code, file number, animal's registration number and any other account information available before calling.
- Double-check work carefully before sending it to the Association; if you have questions on how to complete the form, call before you do it.
- When transferring ownership on an animal, list the animal's registration number or at least its dam's registration number.

Debbie Groce, 4 years

Responsibilities: Corresponds with breeders, answers phones and makes corrections.

Debbie says it's rewarding to help solve problems in the field. "When a breeder calls in with a problem, we want to help them figure out what the problem is," she says.

She enjoys the interaction with breeders. "Breeders can say some pretty silly things to make you laugh. When I am having a bad day, they can put a smile on my face."

Debbie is engaged and has three children (two girls and one boy), ages 15, 13 and 11.

Shirley Holland, 20 years

Responsibilities: Corresponds with breeders about mistakes made on registrations and transfers and AI-service-certificate requests and transfers.

It's rewarding for Shirley to ease the minds of worried Angus breeders and to help junior members get certificates transferred or registered before show deadlines.

"I am actually a city girl," she says. "However, my grandparents had a farm in Albany, Mo., and we visited quite often and also helped with the chores."

Shirley has been married for 35 years and has one son and three grandchildren.

"Most breeders are a joy to help, however, two in particular come to mind—Melanie Taylor and Jerry Bright," Shirley says. "There is always a smile in their voices. This is really appreciated."

Rose Mary Hoyt, 12 years

Responsibilities: Takes phone calls from breeders regarding registrations and transfers and prepares blood-typing kits.

She says the most rewarding facet of her job is helping breeders solve problems. For a faster turnaround, she recommends breeders include membership codes and file numbers on correspondence.

Rose Mary grew up on a farm, but she has no current agricultural ties. She is married and has two grown daughters and a 4-year-old granddaughter.

Peggy Richardson, 1½ years

Responsibilities: Helps breeders with their work and answers any questions they might have about registering or transferring an animal.

The Richardsons live on a farm and breed registered Angus bulls to their cows. Peggy is married and has a son and daughter living at home. "We live in the quaint little town of Weston, Mo.," she says. The Richardsons enjoy traveling, especially to the mountains.

Peggy says she enjoys talking with the breeders from all over the country. "You never know where the next phone call is coming from," she says.

Marcia Roberts, 13 years

Responsibilities: Corresponds with cattle breeders.

Talking with people from all over the country is the best part of working in the registration department, she says.

Marcia has a daughter, Erin, who is 20 years old and married. Her son-in-law's name is Cody, and her grandson, Keifer, is 1½.

"I've worked here at the Association for 13 years, and it seems like most of us here in the office are more like a family than just co-workers," she says.

Carol Waller, 30 years

Responsibilities: Answers telephone calls concerning registrations, transfers, corrections and AI service certificates; sets up duplicate and correction files, plus works on pending files to complete and return to the breeder at the earliest convenience.

"The most challenging aspect of this position is trying to fit all the missing pieces together to find a solution," she says. "It's always rewarding to pick up the telephone and the person on the other end of the phone says, 'You've helped me before, do you have time to help me again?'"

Carol and her husband enjoy traveling and taking short trips.

Carol says the Association is a great place to work. "It is so nice to visit with our customers and encourage them to come and take a tour of our facilities," she says. "It is always pleasant to put a name with a face."

Data Entry and Membership

Barbara Kelly, 44 years

Data-entry department and membership supervisor

Responsibilities: Ensures all the work is entered and issues new memberships; makes address corrections.

For Barbara, the most challenging part of her job is trying to decipher breeders' handwriting. She says she enjoys talking with breeders and tries to provide a speedy turnaround on applications.

Barbara was raised on a farm, which has been beneficial to her since starting at the Association. Growing up, she was active in a 4-H club until she moved to Saint Joseph.

"I remember the first day I started work at Angus. Work was stacked up everywhere. It looked like we would never get it all completed," she says, adding that was before computers. "As I think back over the years, we have changed the way we process the work. Every time we got a new computer system, it could do more of the jobs we would do by hand. With RODEO, it is even easier."

Data entry staff

Responsibility: Data entry for registrations, transfers and weight data; assign new member codes; answer calls about new and existing memberships.

Bev Curran, 11 years

Sherri Curran, 20 years

Jeanette Frump, 5 years

Janet Shackelford, 31½ years

Lois Shipp, 1 month

Joyce Watts, 20 years

Gina Weigart, 6 years

Loretta Wheeler, 32 years

Karen White, 26 years

Bev and Sherri say one of their favorite things about their jobs is working on the computer. Bev is the parent of two children: a son in college and a married daughter.



Handling data entry and membership are (left column, front to back) Gina Weigart, Joyce Watts, Sherri Curran and Jeanette Frump, (right column, front to back) Karen White, Loretta Wheeler, Bev Curran, Janet Shackelford and Barbara Kelly. Not pictured is Lois Shipp.

Away from the office, Jeanette spends time with her family and horses on their farm. She enjoys watching her daughters and granddaughter compete in barrel racing.

Janet, who says she likes learning new jobs, has the added responsibility of filling in for the mail-room supervisor.

Janet recalls one day when some employees decided to play a joke on one of the other employees. "One of the girls went up on the dumbwaiter, and we called the man and told him we had a special delivery letter for him we were sending up," she says. When he looked inside, it about scared the daylights out of him, she says. "He slammed the door and sent her back down!"

Joyce has three grandchildren.

Gina says she enjoys the people with whom she works and admires the way they are willing to help each other. When away from the office, she likes to spend as much time as possible with her 2½-year-old daughter.

"What I like most about my job is the fact that each day's work is different even though the process is the same," Loretta says.

"In 32 years, there are a lot of special memories," she says. "The one that came to mind instantly when I read this survey was one of a breeder who I have never talked to but one who made a difference in my life during a major crisis. While opening the mail, an inspirational message printed on a business card came to my attention. The printed message helped me at that time, and I still carry that card with me. I would like to say 'thank you' to Chris Miller of Ascent Angus Farm. Keep up the good work."

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Tips for Better Service

- Write more legibly, and fill out forms completely and accurately.
- Send in address corrections at least four weeks before moving.
- Completely fill out registration and transfer applications; also give the buyer's complete address under which name the membership stands.
- Plainly mark all corrections on registration and transfer applications.
- Include your complete name and address, including your farm name and member code, when submitting transfer papers.
- Double space when sending in lists of numbers.
- When sending in membership applications, please include a printed version of the signatures.