

Building a Program

Florida juniors strengthen their state junior Angus association.

Story and photos by **Corinne Blender**

The future of agriculture and its programs rests in the hands of youth. What they gain from their grandparents, parents and other industry leaders is vital. In Florida, adults and juniors alike are focusing on building a strong state junior association for the purpose of sustaining Angus leadership in the state.

The adult program is only as good as the junior program that developed its leaders, says Don Bailey, Florida Angus Association president. He cites a former president of the junior program as an example.

"When he stepped down, he moved right on to our board of directors of the adult Association," Bailey says. "We want to see them enjoy these years and their junior program, but we expect to see them step up and become leaders in the adult Association."

Fledgling program

The focus on youth leadership, along with the juniors' abilities to take the reins and drive the bandwagon, proved that the state of Florida could support a junior Angus program. Rose Cameron was the first adult to really focus on channeling the youths' energy. In 1992 she began a move to start the junior program, and it was chartered in 1994. The juniors' enthusiasm for the program was contagious.

"The youth helped get the adults going and, in turn, the adults are helping the youth go," Cameron says. "It's the best of both worlds to have the youth and the adult associations

feeding each other, helping each other, making more excitement and making Angus more visible."

"There were a lot of people who really doubted us and the fact that we could have a self-supported junior association," says Robbie Sand, past president of the Florida Junior Angus Association. "We don't depend entirely on our adult association, and we are really proud of that.

Overcoming all doubters and getting high-school-age kids and young kids all focused on the same goal tends to be a chore in itself."

Persistence, he says, was the

group's biggest asset and sparked growth in the program.

Membership has increased from just more than 15 members 10 years ago to nearly 70 today.

Bailey credits the leadership of Sand and junior advisor

A.L. "Buddy"

McCullough for fanning the flames that really got the program moving.

"Early on we knew that we would make

or break this deal. So that's how, after that first year, we got our program of activities together and we were just responsible for putting stuff on," Sand says. "We

did all the fund-raising. All the shows we went to we had some kind of fund-raiser, a sign, something to get interest together, and it just started building.

"The biggest challenge is always topping what you do," Sand says. "You always want to go a step further. The big challenge is taking that next step."

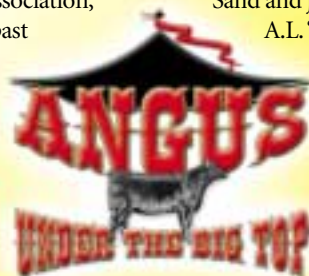
The FJAA elects officers not only to fill an office, but to lead the program to new heights, says Roy Petteway, current FJAA president. "We call the executive committee the leadership team. That's the five elected officers and our advisor."

Many leaders who were with the FJAA at its inception are now

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► Four strong and determined juniors represented Florida at the National Junior Angus Show by making an appearance at opening ceremonies. They traveled more than 1,000 miles to show their cattle and compete in several contests throughout the weeklong event.





► Brittany Peacock represented Florida at the 2002 National Junior Angus Show in Milwaukee, Wis. She says her trip to the junior show was fun because she was able to meet new people.

too old to participate in the junior program. That leads to a whole new challenge for Florida.

"A lot of the members that we have are reaching that dreaded age limit of 21," Petteway says. "We're trying to recruit new members and are getting the word out to the rest of the state that the Angus Association is the biggest junior beef organization in the entire state."

Now that the junior program has reached new heights, the members have found a need to review their written bylaws.

"We have a basic line of bylaws set out and we are going to read over each article, each chapter, word for word and make sure it fits us. If it doesn't, we will change it. We will add or subtract, kind of build our set of bylaws and go from there," Sand says.

Florida juniors say keeping a central focus will help them become more prominent in the junior Angus world.

The Florida juniors would like to be more in the forefront, says Petteway. "We'd like to have other junior Angus associations look at us and try to model what we are doing."

Competitive spirit

Florida's hot weather and minimal seasonal changes are a challenge for most cattle producers. Cameron says that the cattle will never reach the same frame score as cattle raised farther north, but that doesn't stop the juniors from showing some of the top Angus cattle.

"There is a lot of competition in our association," Sand points out. People may think of Florida as the Brahman cow-calf capital of the world, where they don't know what show cattle are, but Sand is quick to say different. "We have some really tough competition. We have some really good cattle."

The Florida show season lasts from October to May. Sand says to add excitement and competition to their events, the junior association offers a mini Roll of Victory (ROV) contest with top point winners receiving premier awards.

Brittany Peacock, the current Florida Angus princess, says competition is what she likes best about being involved with showing cattle and attending livestock shows. Peacock and

three other Florida juniors made the long haul to represent the state at the 2002 National Junior Angus Show in Milwaukee, Wis.

Florida does face some geographical limitations. Even within state, members are spread from southern Florida to the state's western panhandle. That makes it a long drive for some to meet for junior activities and events.

But even though everyone is spread apart, the juniors have still been able to gain support from many of the adults.

One of the biggest supporters of the Florida junior program has been Rick Sherman, owner of Nodoroma Farms, Ocala, Fla. Sherman not only supports the juniors by offering his home for meetings and events, but he also has been one of the biggest financial supporters in offering females for fund-raisers and other donations. Bailey says it is amazing that the juniors receive such great support, both financially and educationally, from leaders in the Angus industry.

"Definitely our biggest success has been targeting some

cattlemen that we feel have something good to offer and talking to them about donating a heifer to us. We put her up for auction at our fall female sale as a big fund-raiser, and that has worked really great," Sand says.

Long-term benefit

As Angus leaders continue to support the Florida juniors, they will continue to grow. And what they gain from their experiences in the junior program can be brought back into the adult association and the Angus industry.

"In 10 years we're going to be a lot bigger and better, and we will look back 10 years before then and we will say, 'Man, I can't believe we were like that. Look at what we are now.' That's just kind of the whole point — we have to be bigger and better than we are today," Petteway says.

The juniors say they know they will experience some ups and downs along the way, but that will not discourage them. "We're back on a high note and we have been going strong for about five years now," Sand says.

"It's like Tom Burke said, 'Happy days for the Angus breed.' You know everybody is really hyped about that. It's really cool that you can have so much excitement, because excitement drives," Sand says. "If it's not exciting and it's not something new, everybody is going to get bored and complacent. We just try to instill that excitement all the way through."

The adult leaders in the Florida Angus Association try to share their knowledge and abilities with the juniors.

"You have to spend time with the kids. One person can't spread far enough to do it all. You have to have more than one person," Cameron says. "You have to have several breeders out there spreading their time out to try to help those kids because that's our future and those kids — with a little direction, they'll go a long way." 