

# Live from Nashville

*Angus juniors gathered in Nashville, Tenn., for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.*

*by Kaci Foraker, editorial intern*

It's a typical scene where a tour bus rolls into Music City, and the door opens to drop off a lone individual in jeans with a guitar case slung over their back. Their dream lies on a stage in a sold-out concert hall.

For the first four days in August, the person stepping off that bus wasn't looking for a spotlight on a stage but rather pursuing a dream to one day lead the Angus industry.

Approximately 150 youth from all over the United States and Canada gathered in Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 1-4 for the 2019 Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference. From freeze-branding to a high-intensity game of "rock, paper, scissors", LEAD delegates experienced a conference that was jam-packed with fun activities.

The American Angus Association Junior Activities Department and National Junior Angus Board (NJAB), in cooperation with the host state, planned the event.



Brody Fitzgerald, NJAB leadership director, spearheaded organizing the conference.

"When we are all at shows, we are usually busy and have cows; but this is a chance for the kids to learn about different aspects of the industry as well as the culture and cities we tour," Fitzgerald says. "[The NJAB] wanted to let them see what the city of Nashville was all about, but we also wanted to get the agriculturalist aspect with the farm tours."

Throughout the LEAD Conference, NJAB members gave their retiring thoughts that reflected on their past two years of service and offered advice to the attendees.

## Day one

Arriving in the afternoon, juniors





got to know each other through icebreaker games and enjoyed fruity drinks during a mocktail hour.

Wendy Sneed from Tennessee's Department of Agriculture introduced the group to the diverse agricultural endeavors the state has to offer. She described her role as a livestock marketing specialist and getting to work with the state's producers in all aspects of their operation.

The six new NJAB members got delegates' blood pumping by challenging them with team relay races that related to learning more about each of the new directors. Ending the night with a laugh, the 12 NJAB members showed their knowledge of the cattle industry by participating in a skit of family feud

featuring the Angus family versus the Aberdeen family led by game show host, Tyler Bush.

## Day two

Entering the corporate world, juniors traveled to CKE Restaurants Holdings, Inc., which is the parent company of the fast food restaurants Carl's Jr. and Hardee's. CKE explained their operation and how Angus beef plays a role in that by leading juniors through five of their departments.

The tour revealed how CKE only uses Angus beef and promotes their product as such. A visit to the test kitchen gave delegates a behind-the-scenes look at what happens in fast food chains. For many the biggest highlight of the tour was analyzing a

restaurant using virtual reality, while others took away the more technical aspects of running a company.

"The most interesting station was marketing, because they talked about how many think marketing is just putting pictures up on social media and there is so much more to it," says Iowa junior Maggie Maas. "Part of me wants to go into marketing. It was really fun getting to see from a business point of view everything marketing does for all of the CKE restaurants."

Then it was off to the Hardee's food truck to enjoy delicious burgers and fries with friends at a local park.

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Top: During the Deer Valley Farm tour, juniors were introduced to how the operation uses freeze branding to improve their identification system.

Bottom: Mark Sims, regional manager, explains how the Association determines a foot score.

The rest of the day allowed delegates to really dive into the attractions Nashville had to offer. A few hours to walk down Broadway gave way to shopping and dining treats while of course hearing different aspiring artists at almost every establishment.

And obviously a must-do in Nashville is going to the show that made country music famous — the Grand Ole Opry. Juniors were able to eat supper and browse through the history of country music legends.

The live show featured multiple acts including Shenandoah, Gone West and Drew Baldridge.

“Getting to go to the Grand Ole Opry has been a bucket-list item for me ever since I was a little kid, listening every Wednesday and Saturday to country music on the radio,” says Nicholas Sheridan, from Terrebonne, Ore. “Really just getting to experience the history and country music culture was a special event.”

## Day three

The longest day of the conference started out with workshops hosted by NJAB members that focused on character development. Juniors were able to build a strategy to help them reach their goals in the cattle industry and beyond.

“Over the years, the part of LEAD that stood out to me the most were the leadership and character workshops that really gave me personal reflection,” Fitzgerald says. “Tyler Bush, Grady Dickerson and I chose the ‘Leaving a Legacy’ workshop, which really facilitated starting open-ended questions where kids have the chance to reflect and ultimately, plan.”

Again, it was back on the tour bus to have a warm welcome at Ingram Angus. Orrion Ingram walked the group through how the operation started just a few years ago. After lunch, juniors learned how the lay of the land was kept in mind when designing facilities for the herd. Bulls and donors were also displayed to understand the marketing and goals of Ingram Angus.

For Jacye Dickerson, Paradise, Kan., the tour was very beneficial to realize that raising cattle differs from region to region and offered a unique perspective of another Angus operation.

“There was a lot of interaction with the juniors as we were making the tour,” Jason Upchurch, Ingram Angus managing partner says. “They were asking real advanced questions about our breeding and nutrition program. It was refreshing to see the amount of interest these kids had in our operation and the knowledge

they had already with eagerness to learn more about raising Angus.”

Equipped with additional knowledge on how to start an Angus herd in today’s world, LEAD traveled south to Deer Valley Farms in Fayetteville, Tenn.

Delegates learned how the operation uses freeze branding to clearly identify all of their cattle.

Regional managers Alex Tolbert and Mark Sims explained the new expected progeny differences (EPDs) relating to foot-scoring and analyzed cows to practice scoring. Blaine Rodgers from Biozyme, Inc. discussed feedstuffs and how to determine proper feed rations for show and commercial stock. Delegates even got to mix a smaller-scale ration based on a Biozyme-developed model.

“At home we are always talking about Deer Valley Farm’s genetics, so it was really fun to tour the operation to gain a background on where it was started,” says Lexi Hicks Canada’s Junior Angus Ambassador. “Everything I learned about nutrition is certainly an important aspect to think about, and the info about feet EPDs is something I can take back home to my operation.”

As the sun set over Deer Valley Farms, juniors ate supper and showed off their dance moves well into the night.

## Day four

Inspiration was the theme for the final day of LEAD. The NJAB and Angus Ambassador, Cale Hinrichsen, shared their tidbits of knowledge with the future generation of

cattlemen and women.

To cap off the LEAD Conference, Laymon Hicks led an interactive session with an underlying message that good things happen when people go and get them.

After a conference full of Angus, fun, sightseeing and learning, juniors were a bit tired as they headed home but they were sure to make plans with their new friends to meet up at the next stop.

“By far one of the things that keeps me coming back to LEAD every year is meeting new friends and networking,” Sheridan says. “Definitely without the LEAD Conference, I would not be able to have the connections I do throughout the country.” 

