

# The Road Less Taken

*There are many paths available to those interested in being involved in the cattle industry. Each is unique and crucial to the success of the Business Breed, even if they are less traveled.*

*by Megan Silveira, assistant editor*

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth.*

Robert Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*, is all about the choices individuals face in life. Multiple paths, varying outcomes, the same desire to reach a destination.

While Frost's poem might be a more philosophical question about how individuals decide where to take themselves in life, it can also be applied to Angus enthusiasts.

Individuals with a passion for the Angus industry might find themselves faced with a similar choice when they want to give back to the Business Breed but cannot manage a herd of Angus cattle. There are several paths of involvement available to those passionate about the breed — it might be the road less traveled.

"If the passion is there, you don't need to have the farm or the cattle to make a difference," says Gina Hope, American Angus Auxiliary president.

From involvement in state breed associations to joining or supporting groups like the Angus Foundation and state junior associations, all the paths to being involved in the Angus industry are not always well-traveled but lead to the same destination.

## Auxiliary advocates

"The American Angus Auxiliary is an organization that promotes education and support for the breeders and the Angus cattle," Hope explains.

She said this organization is all about creating advocates for the beef industry. From hosting competitive events for National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members like the All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® Cook-Off to crowning Miss American

Angus and even offering scholarships, Hope says members of the Auxiliary focus on beef education.

Hope was first drawn to giving back to the Angus breed after her daughter, Catie Hope, attended her first National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). Hope says everywhere she looked within the Angus breed, people were willing to go the extra mile to assist her daughter in reaching her goals and ensuring she was loving every moment spent around livestock.

"It amazed me how much the American Angus Association, Foundation and NJAA do for the juniors to support them," she says. "My desire to work with the Auxiliary came as a payback or pay it forward. I wanted to make those opportunities continue to be available to make juniors' dreams a reality. I did this so some other Angus junior dreaming about this could do it, too."



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Hope says advocates for the beef industry are always in demand, a statement that prevents the Auxiliary's mission from ever going out of style. The organization is always looking for support from new individuals, and Hope says the Auxiliary does all it can to ensure members and volunteers are put in positions where they have an opportunity to make a difference.

For those interested in becoming members, a small annual fee or a single lifetime fee is all it takes to join the Auxiliary. Once a part of the team, Hope says individuals may join

a committee based on the strengths they have. Committee roles range from beef education and fundraising to managing the selection process of every Auxiliary-sponsored award and recruiting judges for scholarships and activities needed to select Miss American Angus.

If joining the Auxiliary isn't the

path for you, Hope says there are still ways to support the group's mission. Through expressing interest in judging competitions and events, supporting fundraisers and donating funds for upcoming scholarships or specific committees, there are countless ways to help Auxiliary members shape future advocates of the beef industry, she adds.

Hope encourages anyone who shares the Auxiliary's mission or passion for the Angus breed to seek out paths of involvement. Owing land or cattle does not define someone's love for the

Business Breed, and Hope says any support of NJAA members or Angus breeders is both needed and appreciated by the Auxiliary.

### Firm foundation

"We focus on supporting youth education in the Angus breed," says Thomas Marten, executive director

of the Angus Foundation. Marten describes the Angus Foundation as the "charitable arm" of the American Angus Association.

Marten says the Angus Foundation's focus is supported by donors who generously fund projects that align with the group's three-part mission — youth, education and research.

This mission revolves around supporting the NJAA and leadership programs, uplifting Angus scholars and promoting available scholarships, and helping advance the Angus breed into tomorrow, he adds.

Supporters of the Angus Foundation's mission can offer a gift to be utilized by the organization. Marten says these gifts are often financial, but more creative options like livestock, property and actual stock and bonds are also accepted. He says these gifts are used to not only promote youth, education and research, but can also make a lasting legacy in the Angus breed.

His passion for agriculture and the people involved within the industry

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And that has made all the difference.*

is what drew Marten to his position with the Angus Foundation.

“We have to constantly be looking at the next generation. Of all the beef cattle breeds, Angus does the best job cultivating the next generations of leaders we need as an agriculture industry. I find it inspiring to be a part of,” he says.

Marten is the walking example of one who took the road less traveled. While he does not currently raise Angus cattle, he is fulfilling his role of helping to make the Business Breed successful. Marten works every day to help not only achieve the Angus Foundation’s mission but also help others with a story similar to his find their role in the industry.

“We’re equipping youth to lead our communities today and tomorrow,” he says. “We can connect with folks who aren’t necessarily out there every day feeding cattle but still recognize the mission none the less.”

## State of giving

For Amanda Leo, the path of involvement she chose led to serving her state breed and state junior association. Leo is the scholarship chairman for the California Angus Association (CAA) and advisor for the California Junior Angus Association (CJAA). Both roles align with one main goal — supporting youth development within the Angus breed in California.

“I am passionate about youth development and Angus cattle, so it

was an easy fit when I was asked to be the advisor,” she explains.

Leo says a majority of her time is spent planning CJAA events, overseeing the CJAA officers, and serving as a liaison between the CJAA, NJAA and CAA. Having grown up actively involved in the CJAA herself, Leo says she loves getting to watch her members grow up Angus.

“My favorite part of being the advisor is watching the members grow in and out of the show ring,” she says. “I am proud that many of our past CJAA members have gone on to be tremendous leaders.”

State associations and junior associations across the country are consistently looking for support in the activities and events they plan, Leo says. Volunteers of all kinds are needed, and Leo says help is never turned away. She believes associations benefit from individuals with a wide skill set and says anyone with a desire to work with Angus youth should reach out to their state associations to get involved.

“To be involved you just have to have the desire and drive, and donate your time and talent,” Leo explains.

Cattle ownership is not necessary to volunteer with or join a state association, and Leo says the only requirement is an enthusiasm for the Angus breed. Leo believes the Angus breed is strong on a national level because of the passion everyone involved in the industry shares. She says she has been a part of

the Angus family since she was an NJAA exhibitor, and loves watching generation after generation of Angus supporters promote the breed.

“Our industry is unique in that friendships I made when I was 13 years old are still intact,” Leo says. “I am now standing beside lifelong friends watching our children show together. I can only hope that one day my children will be standing beside their friends watching the next generation show.”

The one thing Leo says she is certain of is no matter an individual’s background, they will always have a place in the Angus breed. She says she knows the future of the Business Breed is bright because it is fueled by the passion of individuals working in the industry.

When you find yourself drawn to give back, choose the path of service that best fits. It’s not about what you have or what you don’t have in life. It’s about choosing to find the path that leads you to your goal.

The path of involvement you choose does not need to be well-traveled to be effective.

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