

REACHING HIGHER

Going back to the
basics puts
leadership
goals within
NJAA
members'
grasp.

Overcoming obstacles together in an energizing mixer, Amanda Brooks and Hilary Ledford join hands in an attempt to move a hula hoop down a line of 15 juniors without letting go of each other.

JAMI STUMP PHOTO

The sun beat down on the climber's face as he contemplated his next move. In order to reach the next handhold, he had to let go of his hold on the rock. With sweat pouring down his face, he knew what he needed to do. It was time to make a commitment move.

BY JENNIFER
HOTCHKISS

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JENNIFER HOTCHKISS PHOTOS

Kade Devillier thinks he can ride a Harley during a skit organized by the NJAA Board. Little does he know, the rest of the LEAD participants believe he's demonstrating something quite different from how to ride a motorcycle.

In 1993 the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Board of Directors reached for the next handhold and made a commitment move to organize the first-ever NJAA leadership conference. The Board wanted to develop the leadership skills of its junior members while educating them about the beef industry.

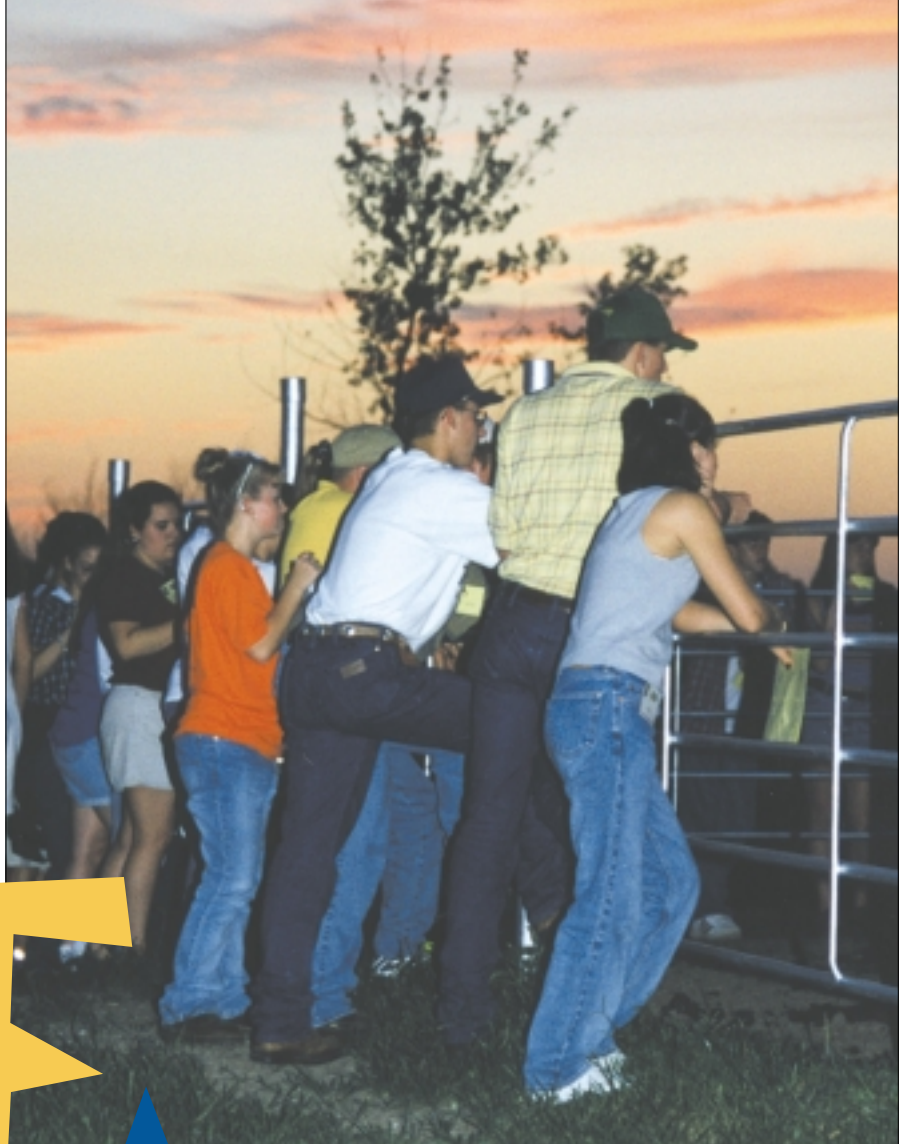
James Fisher, director of junior activities, says, "We believe that leadership is learned. It is a skill that is built upon time after time."

With this in mind, the Board created the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference to provide juniors with an opportunity each year to develop their leadership skills while making new friends within the Angus industry.

Patterned after the Youth Beef Industry Congress (YBIC), a leadership conference held every two years for junior boards from various breed associations and state cattlemen's groups, LEAD seeks to train junior Angus members in leadership techniques and qualities, educating them by utilizing the knowledge of industry speakers and leadership trainers.

The first LEAD Conference was held in Louisville, Ky., in conjunction with the All-American Angus Breeders' Futurity. The initial idea was to draw more youth by holding the conference at the same time as a national show.

However, after reviewing the interest from the first conference, the Board decided to move LEAD around the country to



Junior members competed in a cattle-judging contest at an evening event hosted by Bill and Donna Conley, Clarksdale, Mo.

LEAD

enable more youth to participate. This also gives NJAA members the chance to experience a different environment and culture each year.

In the beginning all of the workshops were led by professionals. Today the NJAA Board is responsible for leading some of the workshops on their own.

"It's important to have the Board lead some of the workshops," Fisher says. "This



As a new millenium approaches, there should be no fear about the future of the NJAA with this group of leaders. NJAA Board members have some well-deserved fun on the *Spirit of St. Joseph* riverboat.

allows the kids to meet and better understand the Board. It also provides an opportunity for the Board to give back what they've gained through their leadership experiences."



Jessica Sawyer, front, holds back her peers during a group activity. The object of the game is to work together to keep every person inside a small hula hoop during a spinoff of the classical game of musical chairs.



Leadership trainer Stewart Kennedy encourages youth, during a team-building workshop, to capitalize on their strengths and not worry about their weaknesses.

Each Board member receives training from either YBIC, one-on-one training sessions with specialists or past LEAD conferences.

"The value of LEAD is multifaceted," Fisher says. "It gives the youth a better understanding of the total industry. It allows them to see beyond the showing and pastures to realize we're just a part of a huge industry. LEAD also is a way to build greater understanding and to recognize a common bond that all Angus kids share."

Another purpose of LEAD is to educate youth about the total beef industry, not just the Angus breed.

"If we're going to continue to be the best breed and best beef program, our youth need to know what makes us the best," says junior activities intern Eric Johnson. "It's extremely important for junior officers, royalty and advisors to be informed on all aspects of the industry so they can accurately inform the public."

More than 100 junior members from 23 states joined together in St. Joseph, Mo., for the seventh annual LEAD Conference, "Back to the Basics," July 22-25.

Junior Angus members toured the American Angus Association and the *Angus Journal*. They were able to see the daily transactions of the Association, ask questions of the staff, and learn the history of the magazine and the Association.

During the course of the conference, youth listened to well-known speakers and industry leaders address issues of importance to the beef industry. NJAA Board members conducted workshops for the group that focused on team building, consumer education and personal values.

■ Working together

Relaters, adventurers, planners and builders joined forces in the workshop titled, "Hey, Baby — What's Your Type?" NJAA Board members Sonya Smith, Lebanon, Tenn.; Jamie Meyer, Douglass, Kan.; and Miranda Grissom, Prague, Okla., assisted J.W. McCurry, Mount Hope, Kan., by working with junior members to understand the importance of different personality types working together to build a stronger team.

"My goal for this workshop was to help the kids realize that even though they may not see eye-to-eye with everyone, they still need ideas from people with various personality types to make things work," McCurry says.

As junior members entered the workshop, they were given handouts that described four different personality types — relaters, adventurers, planners and builders. Members decided which personality best suited themselves and divided into groups according to their personality types.

Each personality group's mission was to develop plans for their own LEAD conference. With themes ranging from "Angus on the Seven Seas" to "From the Pasture to the Belly," junior members realized that combining each plan would make a better LEAD than implementing any single group's plan alone.

■ Educating each other

To educate others, you must first be educated yourself, says past NJAA Board

chairperson Janelle Sommers, Silver Lake, Ind. During the "What Would You Say?" workshop, Melissa Pickrell, Paris, Ky.; Diana Covell, Frederick, Md.; and Sommers taught youth the importance of being an educated producer.

"As junior Angus members, we have an incredible opportunity to serve as ambassadors for the Angus breed," Pickrell says. "Whether you're in the showing or at school, you are representing the beef industry."

With this opportunity comes a great responsibility for junior members to know their facts and speak accurately about the industry. Sommers encouraged them to be resourceful about finding information and to be aware of the changes taking place in the industry.

"Oftentimes we focus on the consumer's lack of knowledge about beef," Covell says. "In all actuality we, as producers and promoters of beef, need to be more aware of the facts we pass on to consumers to ensure they're getting the right message."

Beef promotion ideas were also discussed, as well as how these ideas can be communicated effectively to the consumer.

"You need to tell people what's in it for them," Pickrell says. "Use accurate, credible information when you explain to them why they should eat beef."

■ True to self

Encouraging kids to stay true to their morals and values, Amy Dyar, Crossville, Ala.; Julie Dameron, Lexington, Ill.; and Hutch Porter, Jefferson, Ga., presented "The High Price of Low Living" workshop.

"We want to help the kids understand the meaning of ethics, not only in the showing, but in their daily lives," says Dyar.

NJAA Board members challenged kids to take a look at their value characteristics during "The Ethics Challenge" game. They discussed where morals originate, where



The windiest man wins. Adam Jones and Jarrett Martin race to the finish line with their own specially designed spacecrafts during an activity led by the Kennedys. Each spacecraft mounts on a fishing line stretched across the room.



Kids, cattle and beautiful weather provided the perfect setting for a volleyball game at Conley Angus Farm.

morals are displayed and which morals are of greatest importance.

"I believe morals and values play an important role in this organization," says NJAA Board member Julie Scarlett, Snow Camp, N.C. "This is a family-oriented group with a solid foundation based on ethical choices."

Members were also challenged to respect each other with honesty and understanding.

By understanding your morals and values, you're able to make better choices, says Karl Holshouser, Gold Hill, N.C. "This workshop helped me realize the importance of good morals and how I can teach others to do the right thing."

Junior member Callie Birdsell, Sparta, N.C., adds, "If we slip up as leaders, the younger kids in our associations will learn from that. It's our responsibility to help bring them up the right way."

■ Taking the responsibility

Will you "LEAD" your state associations when you go home, or will you be "led"? Leadership trainers Stewart and Casey Kennedy, Edmond, Okla., posed this question to juniors during the conference.

Leadership involves many sacrifices and hard work, Scarlett says. A good leader is someone who can delegate responsibility and get everyone involved. They balance the strengths and weaknesses of the team to make a stronger group.

"In order for our junior association to be strong, we need good leaders," Addie Hawkins, Magnolia, Ky., says. "It's important to be able to unite people together and to be the type of person they want to follow."

Kentucky Junior Advisor Sammy Ayres

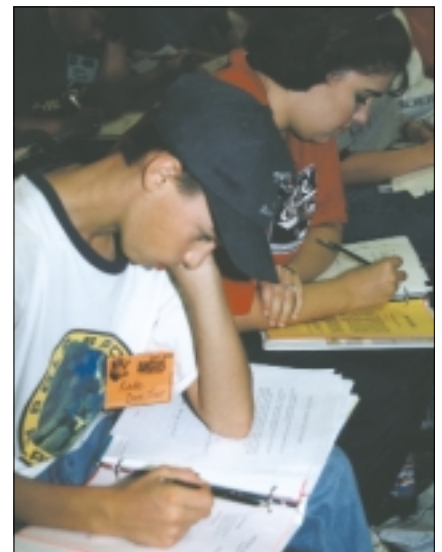


NJAA Board patrol (l to r) Allison Porter, Hutch Porter and John Melton keep juniors in line throughout the conference with a high-powered watergun.



In order to get off the island, NJAA Board members Garrett Pohlman, Amy Dyar, and Diana Covell demonstrate the importance of teamwork to accomplish common goals during their remake of "Gilligan's Island."

believes the future of the Angus industry will be only as successful as its junior members. "LEAD is one way that I can help the juniors find the best opportunities they can in life," Ayres says. "I know the leadership skills they gain now will influence their lives in a positive way by helping them find jobs, meet new people and appreciate themselves more."



Kade Devillier and Kelli Armbruster respond to survey questions from the NJAA Board about the conference.

NJAA Board members also encouraged youth to organize state and regional LEAD conferences to provide more junior members with leadership training.

Jennifer Stamey, Statesville, N.C., is currently planning a regional LEAD conference in North Carolina. "This LEAD Conference gave me the opportunity to learn about things that we can teach at our regional LEAD," Stamey says. "I tried to listen to what the other kids liked and what they didn't like about LEAD in order to make our conference more appealing."

■ Wholehearted effort

"A major key to success in life is to become so immersed in what you want to accomplish that you lose yourself in it," Casey Kennedy says.

Casey offered this visualization.

SHELIA STANNARD PHOTO

A trapeze artist was teaching a frightened beginner how to swing from the bar one day. When the beginner asked the teacher how to stock up the courage to make the first move, the teacher replied, "First you must throw your heart over the bar, and then your body will follow."

To become the person that you never thought you could be, Casey says you have to put your whole heart into your dreams.

Sommers says the best part of finishing a job is knowing she completed the task wholeheartedly. When she first assumed the duties of NJAA Board chairperson in 1998, she knew if she wanted to be a positive influence on the lives of NJAA members, she needed to dedicate many hours of her time to helping them achieve goals and grow individually.

"You don't realize how satisfying leadership can be until you drop all barriers and devote yourself to your organization," Sommers says.

■ Facing the future

In the closing session, Stewart Kennedy emphasized the importance of making a plan for the future.

"If you don't have a good plan, you won't reach your goals," Stewart says.

The beef industry holds many challenges. In order to move the industry forward, a good plan must be established. Stewart challenged youth to think outside the box to come up with new solutions to old problems in the industry, including consumer acceptance.

"With the theme 'Back to the Basics,' I have realized how important it is for us to educate consumers about the positive aspects of beef as a heart-healthy diet," says Allison Porter, Jefferson, Ga. "We have to educate ourselves more so we can understand our history and know what we need to do to make things better in the future."

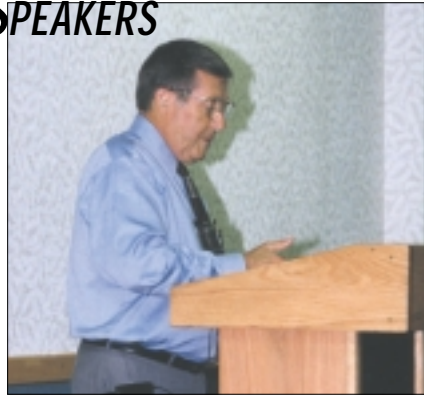
Challenges always will arise, and opportunities will continue to emerge.

"Too many times we let opportunities pass by because we doubt our skills," Casey says. "There are challenges and difficulties, but if we stick together, we can accomplish anything."

Just as the rock climber must overcome the fear in the pit of his stomach when it comes time to reach for the next handhold, so must the juniors of this organization.

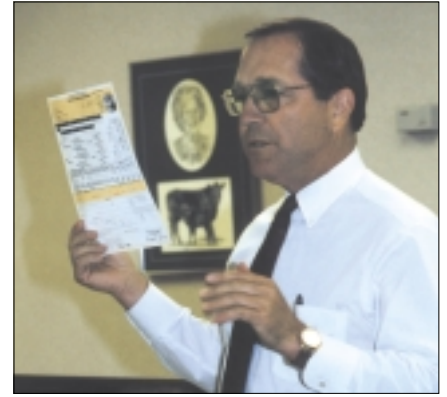
"Make a commitment move to push that fear down where it belongs," Stewart says. "That's when you'll begin to make a real difference in the beef industry and your junior organization."

LEAD SPEAKERS



JAMI STUMP PHOTO

Dean Hurlbut, director of activities for the American Angus Association, takes junior members on a walk back in time to the days when the National Junior Angus Association program was being organized. "Masterpieces do not just happen," Hurlbut says. "They are a result of many years of hard work by people like you."



JENNIFER HOTCHKISS PHOTOS

"The pedigree information backed by performance data is the currency of the beef cattle industry," says American Angus Association Executive Vice President Richard Spader, stressing the value of pedigreed livestock. He believes Angus cattle will continue to have a place in the industry if the youth of today continue to emphasize the importance of genetic traits and predictability within the Angus breed.



JAMI STUMP PHOTO

People with a vision recognized the need for an association to serve Angus breeders from across the country. Keith Evans, former director of communications and public relations for the Association, shares this vision and the history of the American Angus Association with juniors.



Will Rogers once said, "Even on the right track, if you stand still you will get run over." Bill Bowman, director of commercial relations, discusses the role of Angus cattle in the market and how Angus breeders must continue to develop relationships with commercial producers.



Emphasizing the importance of using Angus genetics to increase quality and consistency in beef production, John Crouch, director of performance programs, discusses the advantages of expected progeny differences (EPDs).



Sherri Spader, regional vice president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, presents an overview of ag and food policies in the beef industry while describing the NCBA's upcoming campaign strategy.