

Taking It to the Streets

Interns generate enthusiasm for the brand.

by Crystal Meier

This spring, six interns embarked on a journey that would take them through New York City's streets, the Oklahoma plains and sunny California. Their goals were twofold: to develop a national image for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand and to generate enthusiasm among meat department and deli staff members who interact with consumers. It was the first nationwide effort by Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) to update point-of-sale materials in all 3,467 licensed U.S. stores.

"Our staff have developed relationships with retailers at the corporate level, but we've never before reached this magnitude [in] stores," says Steve Ringle, the CAB retail specialist in charge of the intern program. "We're helping meat department personnel become better salespeople for our brand, and also raising consumer awareness.

"Our licensees benefit from the interaction, and we're saving them time by putting the materials up for them," Ringle adds. "They can focus on selling more of our product and even get a crash course in merchandising solutions."

National image campaign

The internship program is in its third year, but the charge to update so many stores came with the brand's transition to a premium logo and the trademarked "Angus beef at its best" tagline.

"We're developing a consistent, national image of our brand in every store. We want consumers to recognize the brand the first time and every time they buy it," says retail director Al Kober.

CAB staff began placing new materials in Ohio area stores April 15. Sara Still, animal science major from Ohio State



► Interns Sandra Gruber (forefront) and Jaime Bard met the challenges of setting up unique displays store after store. This allowed the retailers to focus on what they do best — selling CAB product.



PHOTOS BY ROCKY HONEYWELL

► Jaime Bard is one of six interns updating point-of-sale materials in retail stores. This was the first nationwide effort by CAB to tackle such a project with all its 3,467 licensed U.S. stores.

University (OSU), was with them to learn the ropes.

"I eagerly anticipated expanding my production experience," she says. "The internship promised exposure to every level of retail sales and marketing."

The other five interns, also animal science majors with similar personal objectives, joined the effort as spring wore on, often working in pairs. Still's teammate, Rachel Postin, came from the University of Georgia. Angie Walker and Michael Hogberg attend the University of Nebraska and Michigan State University, respectively. Two more OSU students, Sandra Gruber and Jaime Bard, joined the team in June.

Their assigned goal was to reach 1,284 stores by Aug. 30. They had done so by July 19, looking to continue the rollout on the West Coast. Each intern was completing 10 to 12 stores per day; sometimes they visited as many as 15 — twice the initial projection.

"Their progress and the amount of information they've been able to bring us about our

customers is remarkable. It should prove very helpful in shaping our future marketing and education programs," Ringle says.

Gaining experience

Such achievement is even more impressive in light of the challenges they faced. From the first day, each intern set his or her own daily schedule and pace for the number of stores visited. Some had never flown or rented a car. Big city streets were definitely new territory. They often set up materials alone, in a new region every day, with only a cell phone and laptop to find their way.

"Flying alone, navigating places I've never been and finding a place to stay each night were all part of accomplishing the day's tasks," Bard says. Retail staff had them on the road very early in their internships to establish the importance of customer interaction.

"The meat managers were excited to see us," Postin says. "When we were answering their questions, you could really tell

CONTINUED ON PAGE 206

how interested they were and [that they] appreciated our being there.” They soon found meat department personnel and customers looking to them for information. It was a role they took seriously.

“At times, it seemed like a quiz bowl,” Bard says. But each intern was well-prepared to

assist the multitude of personalities and meet the challenges of setting unique displays in store after store. Marketing dynamics were evident in the variations of merchandising and pricing tactics customized to satisfy specific demographics.

“Growing up, we never went

farther than our own freezer to select a beef cut,” Gruber recalls. “I saw how the product is displayed, what retail prices are, who buys beef and what consumers understand.”

The interns chose to learn as much or as little as they wanted, but their travel reports point to more education about marketing beef than they could have obtained in any classroom. That included such life lessons as learning to read people and

determine what they need, Hogberg says.

It didn’t take long for the travel, interaction and physical labor of displaying the point-of-sale materials to become routine. That was a good thing, since it became their way of life for days or weeks on end. A benefit was the opportunity to travel and see new sights.

The interns learned to function as part of the CAB sales team, to be at ease conversing in

retail terms and to be confident in acquiring knowledge that should help their careers.

“Working with the brand’s key accounts from the start identified the amount of responsibility we had,” Walker adds.

Positive comments from corporate contacts, such as Chris Sheehan at Stop & Shop in Quincy, Mass., affirm the program’s impact, Kober notes. Sheehan complimented the

“all-American, clean-cut” crew, adding, “I would not have expected anything less, because that’s what CAB is all about — one of the truly class companies left in the industry. We want to do all we can to support and promote CAB.”



► Intern Michael Hogberg discusses the materials and merchandising solutions with a meat department manager.



PHOTO BY ANGIE WALKER