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Junior Angus Leaders Discover Their Worth

by *Shelia Stannard*

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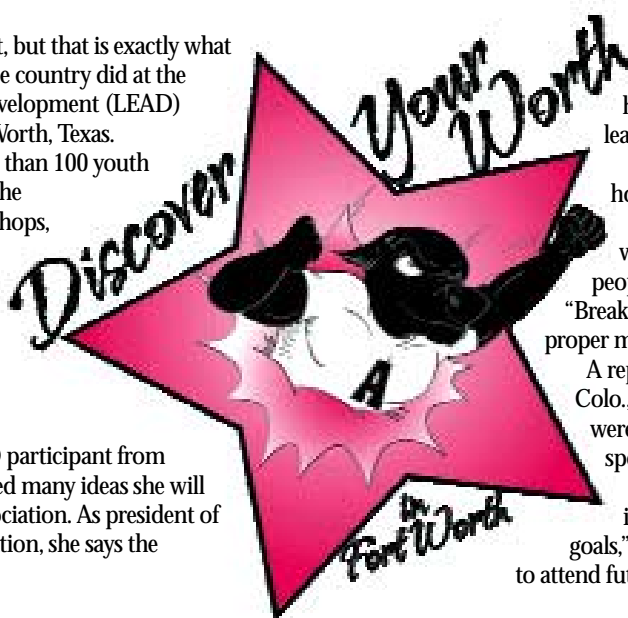
Discover your worth.

It seems like a bold statement, but that is exactly what junior Angus leaders from across the country did at the 2003 Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference July 31-Aug. 3 in Fort Worth, Texas.

During the four-day event, more than 100 youth between the ages of 14 and 21 had the opportunity to participate in workshops, gain insight from speakers and tour East Texas to enhance their personal and leadership skills while becoming better-acquainted with the beef industry.

Discover

Ashlea Turner, a first-time LEAD participant from Dyersburg, Tenn., says she discovered many ideas she will be able to take back to her state association. As president of the Tennessee Junior Angus Association, she says the workshops were very worthwhile.



“Beef’n Up Your State Association” focused on fund-raising, communicating with members, and hosting and organizing state and regional leadership conferences.

“I learned a lot about fund-raising, and I hope to get more people in Tennessee involved,” Turner says. “The icebreaker workshop showed me how to get more people involved.” The icebreaker workshop, “Breaking Up is Hard to Do,” also reviewed proper meeting procedures.

A repeat LEAD attendee from Montrose, Colo., Brandon Creamer says his discoveries were found through the lineup of top-notch speakers.

“The speakers told us how to succeed in life — how to take steps to achieve our goals,” Creamer explains. He adds that he plans to attend future LEAD conferences, and that the

tours were his favorite part of the event.

Matt Perrier, director of commercial programs for the American Angus Association, talked about the leadership position of Angus producers in the commercial cattle industry. "We are on the verge of the most profitable, exciting times for the industry in decades," the former chairman of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) told the group. He encouraged them to be proactive in their roles in the industry.

Other speakers included Casey Worrell, Association regional manager (RM) for Texas and New Mexico; Erin Worrell, communications manager for the Texas Beef Council; Teri Barber, livestock marketing manager for the Texas Department of Agriculture; Diane Johnson, who owns and operates two businesses and discussed the opportunities and challenges that face entrepreneurs; and Cheramie Viator, hay and cattle marketing manager for Camp Cooley Ranch, Franklin, Texas.

Viator welcomed the group to an in-depth tour of the ranch, which is the largest-volume producer of coastal hay in the United States. The following day, she talked to the attendees about the stepping-stones she took as an NJAA member and NJAA Board member to find success in the cattle industry.

"Work hard. Dream big. Believe in yourself, and learn to be flexible," Viator advised.

Worth

Following a day of workshops, the youth were ready for a night of dancing at A-Plus Cattle Co., but first they learned some of the most important lessons during their time in the Lone Star State. Rick Rigsby, an assistant football coach at Texas A&M University, challenged everyone to discover their worth by focusing on being the best they can be. He spoke from personal experiences and lessons he learned from his own father, a third-grade dropout who had achieved success through hard work and determination.

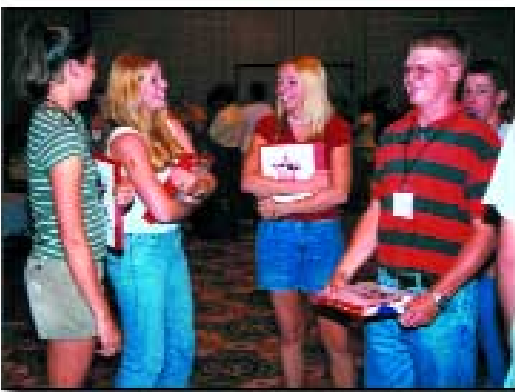
"Pursue excellence every day," Rigsby told the group. "Make excellence a habit, not just an act. And, be of strong character. Choose what is right."

Rigsby said that value is reflected through work ethic and attitude. He added that everyone should put forth the effort to make the most out of life.

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► **Above:** Juniors held signs of encouragement and support as NJAA Board members competed in "Angus Idol" at the conclusion of the first day. Even though the judges were harsh on contestants, like Kid Steer Jock and Christina Aguilahiefer, the audience participation was filled with excitement to discover their worth.

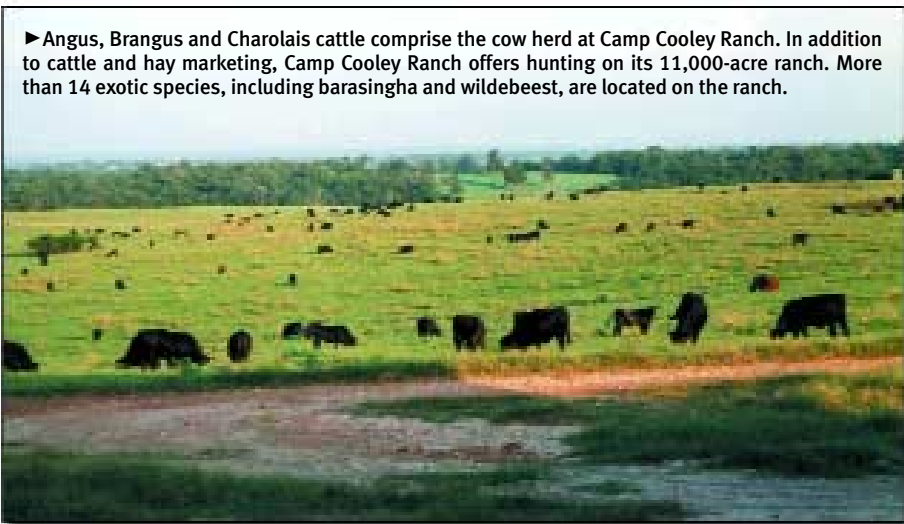


► **Left:** New friends meet and old friendships are rekindled as the result of ice-breakers that kick off the LEAD Conference. 2003 marks the 11th year of LEAD.

► **Right:** Erin Worrell, communications manager for the Texas Beef Council, talked about beef consumers and creating demand for the end product. She displayed some of the newest advertising campaigns, including print and television ads, and played the latest radio spots, all of which are made possible through beef checkoff funds.



► Angus, Brangus and Charolais cattle comprise the cow herd at Camp Cooley Ranch. In addition to cattle and hay marketing, Camp Cooley Ranch offers hunting on its 11,000-acre ranch. More than 14 exotic species, including barasingha and wildebeest, are located on the ranch.



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"He made me realize that people do have an impact and that everyone does make a difference," Turner says.

Arkansas junior member Kate Miller agreed and said Rigsby put her back on track to accomplish her goals. "I know I can get more out of myself instead of following the crowd," she says. "He really put the fire back into me."

In addition to the educational and inspirational speakers, a day of the LEAD Conference was set aside for tours of the area. The day began in Fort Worth, at the Texas Cattle Raisers Museum, where the attendees viewed interactive displays and read about cattle ranching history. Next, the tour stopped at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame. Guided tours and a short video highlighted the spirit of the cowgirl and introduced the youth to many women who have made differences.

Before noon, the group visited the historic stockyards, where they watched the daily cattle drive of Texas Longhorns down the brick street in front of the historic Exchange Building. Harold Pitchford, Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department, told how the daily cattle drive started in 1999. It attracts thousands of viewers each year.

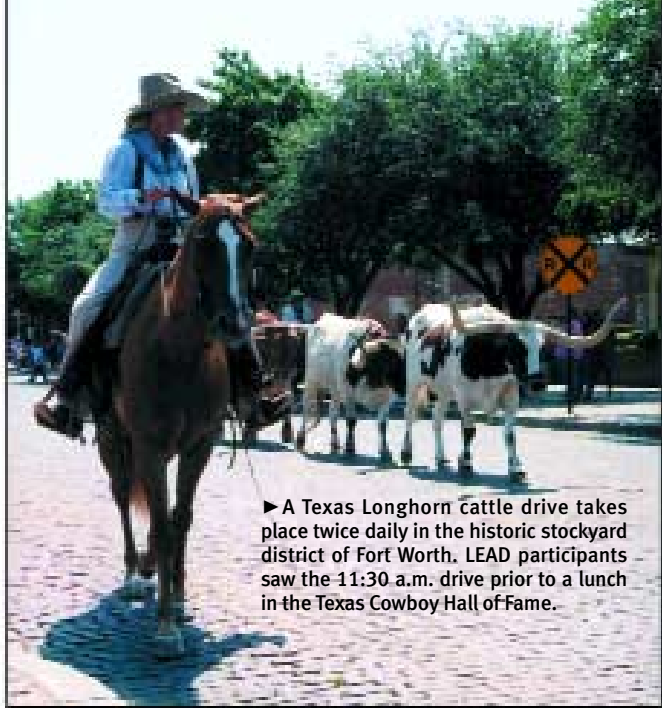
Buses left Fort Worth and drove south for a stop at Sullivan's Supply. There, the group learned about the background of the business, saw orders being shipped from the warehouse and were taught about marketing and creating products to meet consumer demand.

The final stop of the day was at Camp Cooley Ranch, where three stations were set up for the attendees to visit.



► **Above:** Matt Jones explains the importance of using ultrasound technology to determine carcass value in live cattle. He gave a thorough demonstration before explaining what the images meant to those who looked at two screens of scanned images.

► **Left:** During one of the stops at Camp Cooley Ranch, LEAD participants crowd around the chute to watch an ultrasound demonstration. Later, participants were given the chance to scan the animal to determine backfat thickness and ribeye area.



► A Texas Longhorn cattle drive takes place twice daily in the historic stockyard district of Fort Worth. LEAD participants saw the 11:30 a.m. drive prior to a lunch in the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame.



► During a tour stop at Sullivan's Supply near Hillsboro, juniors and adults saw firsthand how rope halters are made in the supply warehouse.



Stations included demonstrations about ultrasound and the importance of recordkeeping, cutting horses working to sort cows, and the embryo transfer (ET) process and vaccination programs. After a day of tours, the group gathered around a campfire under the stars to reflect on their experiences.

LEAD wrapped up on Sunday morning with a group of juniors presenting a short inspirational service. Kara Wilson, Orleans, Ind.; Jill and Jaci Jagers, Sulphur Bluff, Texas; Mark and Kevin Gleason, Midlothian, Texas; Claressa Humphrey, Ozark, Ark.; and Brandon Walker, Lexington, Ga., shared song, scripture, personal stories and prayers with the group.

Minnie Lou Bradley was the final speaker of the event. A longtime Angus producer from Memphis, Texas, she told the crowd to take opportunities whenever they appear. A member of the American Angus Association Board of Directors, Bradley told the group that while tradition may seem important, it is also important to take advantage of technological advances.

"Be proud of your heritage, but be able to be open to new ideas. Think outside of the box," she reminded the group. "You have opportunities. Take them and never lose your integrity."



► Using cutting horses to sort cattle away from a group was demonstrated during a stop at Camp Cooley Ranch. Horses are used daily at Camp Cooley due to the size of the operation.



► The Texas Junior Angus Association hosted a fajita dinner at A-Plus Cattle Co., following a day of workshops. Some parents of Texas juniors prepare a hearty meal of tortillas, beef, onions and peppers.



► A junior Board workshop, "The Inside Scoop," focused on current industry topics. Small groups were assigned a topic with some information and were asked to prepare skits to educate the entire group about their topic. Here, John McCurry (standing), Kansas, listens in and offers advice to a group.



► During "Don't Be a Geek — Learn how to Speak," tips were given on public speaking, making introductions to a group and the proper etiquette to present an award. Britney Creamer (left), Colorado, and Alison Johnston, Minnesota, exchange information about one another so they can introduce each other in front of the group.



► From left, Jill and Jaci Jagers, Texas, and Brandon Walker, former Foundation director for the NJAA, lead a devotional service during the final morning of LEAD. Any youth with a story or song was encouraged to share with the group before it broke and everyone headed their separate ways.