

Life in the Angus Lane

Angus juniors spent a week in Indianapolis learning how to lead the industry in the future.

by Riley Reep, communications intern

As the sun shines bright down on the green pastures in rural Indiana, a group of juniors gather around a cattle herd to learn from a mentor about the operation. However, there is more to this group than what meets the eye, as the passion of these young cattlemen and women will fuel the future of the Angus breed.

For others, the summer months bring vacations and relaxation. For National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members, the summer break entails shows and leadership conferences. By taking the step of being actively involved in the program, Angus juniors aim to elevate their future by taking

advantage of educational and networking opportunities.

Nearly 100 Angus juniors gathered in Indianapolis, Ind., for the 2021 Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference from July 29-Aug. 1 to expand their knowledge of the beef cattle industry and make new connections with other breed enthusiasts. Angus juniors buckled up to live “Life in the Angus Lane,” for a weekend of farm visits, industry workshops and leadership development activities.

The NJAA hosts many leadership conferences for its juniors every year. By hosting conferences in different locations around the

nation, the NJAA hopes to expose junior members to other parts of the country and help them experience agriculture in new ways. Additionally, juniors have opportunities to foster relationships within the industry.

Driving forward

Juniors kicked off the jam-packed weekend with breakout sessions with the National Junior Angus Board of Directors (NJAB) and guest speaker, Craig Huse, president and co-owner of Huse Culinary.

Huse spoke with the juniors about what his company looks for in the beef products they select for their six upscale restaurants in Indianapolis.





The LEAD conference provides Angus youth an opportunity for team building, leadership and character development as well as fostering new and old friendships between members.

Huse says he believes in the power of doing business with the people that he and his company have established relationships with. As a testament to his word, one of Huse Culinary's restaurants, St. Elmo Steak House, has used Angus beef through their partnership with Meats by Linz for 12 years.

In Huse's closing remarks, he emphasized the pride he felt seeing young cattlemen and women willing to learn more.

"You are educating yourself. You are networking with others here," Huse says. "That means a lot to people like me and St. Elmo Steak House."

Juniors were also able to visit farms across Indiana. The group interacted with the leaders of Sankey Angus, Sunrise Sunset Farms and Horstman Cattle Company about topics



such as embryo transfer (ET), herd management and more.

Cody and Lindsay Sankey of Sankey Angus challenged juniors to find their "why" for wanting to be a leader in the cattle industry and to understand the importance of the opportunity of attending the LEAD conference.

"The LEAD program is vital today in youth development," Cody Sankey says. "The cattle are a tool for this program, but the people that they connect you to are what matters. You

never know when someone you meet on trips like these can benefit you in the future."

Networking with other members is a goal of the LEAD conference. However, the NJAA also offered industry workshops to connect juniors with leaders within the agricultural industry.

Elanco, Corteva and Cargill hosted sessions about each of their companies to showcase a different side of agriculture. Although the

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conference is focused on the beef industry, the group also visited Fair Oaks Farms in Fair Oaks, Ind., to learn about crops, dairy cattle and the pork industry.

As juniors finished the final lap of the conference, they reflected on the influence their weekend spent in Indianapolis would have on their future. Former communications director for the NJAB Kelsey Verjraska encouraged juniors to be present, connected and authentic.

Although the focus of the NJAA revolves around the cattle industry, there is a bigger picture in mind — the future of agriculture. Longtime junior member of the association Lizzie Schafer of Owaneco, Ill., says her involvement in the program has opened the door to many opportunities for her future.

“This was my first LEAD, and I have to say it has been one of the best experiences of my entire junior show career,” Schafer says. “The friendship connections made here are absolutely unmatched by any other conference.”

Whether it was a junior’s first LEAD conference or their last, the weekend spent with other juniors devoted to the Angus breed sparked the passion for all.

Madeline Bauer, events coordinator for the NJAA, reminded the group about the value of growing up in the agricultural industry.

“Your future and the future of the

Angus breed is bright because of you,” Bauer says. “You, along with other juniors in attendance, were willing to go the extra mile by developing the leadership skills and knowledge needed to keep the Angus breed on top.” **AJ**

