

# Building Bonds

*Opening the gates at Seldom Rest Farms earns the Foster family the CAB Ambassador Award.*

*by B.J. Eick, Certified Angus Beef*

As the sun peers over the horizon at dawn, a small group of Angus cows graze through beams of light along the tree line. Across the road, herd bulls stake claim to new lots as they're positioned for display. Near a large white canopy, Chef Peter Rosenberg fires up the grill to prepare a special breakfast, while other members of the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) team work with the Foster family to prepare for today's guests.

Among Angus cattlemen, Seldom Rest Farms, Niles, Mich., is a brand synonymous with showing success at the highest level. But this morning, it's not a flood of frenzied heifer buyers pulling into the driveway. In just an hour, a dozen members of the Meijer communications team will arrive to experience firsthand how the beef they sell in their stores is raised.

They'll get to touch and feel and taste and smell every aspect of the cattle business, from the delicious flavor of *Certified Angus Beef*® ribeyes to the slippery sensation of you-know-what on their shoes. Questions of every nature will be asked and answered by true cattlemen and champions for CAB: Bruce, Scott and Andrew Foster.

Ready willingness to open their gates to CAB guests and share their story earned Seldom Rest Farms the CAB 2023 Ambassador Award.



## SELDOM REST FARMS

Back row (from left): Suellen, Bruce, Scott, Elaine, Emilee, Danielle Matter, Andrew, Michael Matter, Lane Matter.

Front row (from left): Everly, Emersyn, Lois, Eleanor Foster and Lydia Matter

The Fosters were recognized in September at the CAB Annual Conference in Las Vegas.

Beyond their eagerness to engage the other end of the beef supply chain, the Fosters have a deep history in supporting the Angus family.

## Growing a herd

Brothers Bruce and Scott operate Seldom Rest Farms along with Scott's son, Andrew. Started by their parents Dale and Lois Foster as a row-crop and dairy farm, Andrew represents the third generation of the family operation. The fourth generation is in the wings, with a growing group of Dale and Lois's great-grandchildren

already beginning to show an interest in the farm.

"We got our first Angus steer when I was 9 years old," Bruce says. "I took him to the fair and had champion Angus steer and champion steer overall."

The brothers took the money from that winning steer and bought their first beef heifers. What began as a 4-H project blossomed into their own cow herd, and today it has become one of the nation's leading suppliers of premier show heifers.

"When we were looking to get our kids involved, we kind of got hooked," Scott says. "The quality of the people we met is what drew us



When the guests step into the field, cameras are out. For many attendees at CAB Ranch Days, it's their first time at a farm and seeing cows from inside the pasture fence.

in the most," he continues, noting the friends his family has made through the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA).

## Serving the Angus community

Just more than 90 miles from Chicago, the pristine show facility and cattle at Seldom Rest Farms provide the perfect backdrop to host CAB stakeholders from around the Midwest. Chefs from top restaurants, grocery store managers, butchers and beef marketers alike love visiting the Foster family.

Today's Meijer visit marks the sixth CAB Ranch Day hosted at the farm in the last three years.

The show cattle operation helps

CAB partners learn about cattle production because the Fosters' passion for the junior livestock program ties directly to the future of production agriculture and opportunities for young people through all segments of the industry.

"One of our biggest goals here at Seldom Rest Farms is to work with the next generation," Scott says. "As you look at the future, we really need to have these young people come back and be a part of the registered Angus business. We believe in the Angus breed for the opportunities. There are opportunities to find a place in the beef industry, no matter what segment you're in, and we still believe that opportunity exists for the next generation and the generation after that."

The Fosters have firsthand experience in the opportunities the CAB brand helps create for anyone with a passion for the beef business. While Andrew runs the show cattle operation, his sister, Danielle Matter, works to elevate the brand as director of brand experience and education for CAB.

One might think Danielle does a little

arm-twisting to get groups in the door at the family farm, but it only takes a moment to realize the eagerness to host, educate and entertain visitors is a responsibility the entire family takes seriously. While success at Seldom Rest Farms might not be measured in pounds of beef sold, they view the opportunity to host groups as a service to all members of the American Angus Association.

"We believe in the product. We believe in our fellow Angus breeders who are out there producing seedstock. We believe in the packers, in the feedlots, [and all the people] who are making it happen," Andrew says. "It's important for visitors to see that we all care about the product that ends up on their plate."

That makes it a priority to find time to talk about what they do and how CAB plays a role in their ability to pursue this lifestyle by increasing the demand of Angus genetics.

"We're trying to tell the story as best we can from the segment of the industry that we're involved in," Bruce says. "We make time to do it because it's the right thing to do."

It's a story that goes beyond *The Business Breed*, too.

"When we give a tour for CAB, we're representatives for the entire beef industry," Andrew says, "and we

*Continued on page 106*



want people to know how much we care for the cattle and for the land.”

## Opening the gate

As guests arrive, they're greeted by the CAB team and two-term American Angus Association Board member Scott Foster. While they're delighted by the hospitality, their eagerness to learn is evident. It's also clear the Fosters are equally as hungry to find out about their visitors and all they hope to learn.

“The Foster family doesn't just open their farm to hosting groups, they create an experience that makes a lasting impression on the restaurants, distributors and grocery stores who sell the *Certified Angus Beef*® brand,” says Deanna Walenciak, CAB's vice president of brand marketing, domestic. “Customers leave every visit with more confidence in how beef is raised and have a stronger connection to the people who are caring for the cattle.”

Hosting CAB Ranch Days helps to build the value of the brand throughout the entire supply chain by allowing both sides to meet and ask questions.

“Whether it's chefs or restaurant owners, it allows us to interact with them so they can see what it's like on a daily basis for the people raising the product,” Andrew explains. “They can see the things that we go through. They know where our passion comes from, where some of the struggles are and what keeps us going from day to day. And they can take those stories back and share with their customers and the consumers down the line.”

## Adding value for the future


“We feel like opening our home is probably the most effective way of ensuring that the beef industry and CAB can continue on as strong as they are and hopefully even have a stronger future,” Andrew says.

The Fosters are building that

fervor for agriculture with the next generation of Angus enthusiasts.

“I think as you look at our family farm here, what we're looking to do in the future is to make the entire business better for the next generation,” Scott says.

As Ranch Day activities come to an end, 7-year-old Everly Foster, who spent most of the morning assisting Chef Peter, leads a young show heifer from the barn into the big, white tent where guests are seated. Before she can stop the calf, she's surrounded by guests who have selfie mode engaged.

At the end of the day, sometimes the best way to create a bond between our family farmers and ranchers and people who enjoy the CAB brand is to let them pet the cows. 

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