



Things That Matter More

A newly crowned young lady from Niles, Mich., once said, “As a little girl, I looked up to the young lady who wore the red jacket, the leather sash and the beautiful tiara ... I plan on a year where little girls learn that dreams can come true and if they really want something, they must work very hard to achieve it.”

by Sarah Moyer, CAB intern

That 2008 Miss American Angus, Danielle (Foster) Matter still works hard for the Angus community, only without the crown, sash and tailored red jacket. She’s the senior manager for education and events for the *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®) brand, where she signed on in 2011.

Once an Angus kid

Growing up in the show ring, she built lasting connections within the Angus breed, applied today to her work for producers and those old show-ring friends who feel like family. Showing with them through the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) made up “the

most incredible years of my life.”

“I don’t remember a day when I didn’t want to grow up following in my family’s footsteps of showing Angus cattle,” she says.

One of the connections from that time is Matter’s mentor and fellow Michigan native Deanna Walenciak, who supervises the CAB marketing education team.

“My younger sister was showing cattle at the same time as Danielle and her brother Andrew,” Walenciak says. “I got to watch her from afar and see her show cattle, so I hadn’t connected with her in her grown years and in my grown years. So it was cool when she came here, and I

connected with her as a young adult and leader.”

Matter held the title of leadership director on the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) in addition to her year as Miss American Angus. During that impressionable time, she began to see herself reaching for a career promoting the Angus breed — and then she visited the CAB office.

“I was at that moment starting college and figuring out what my fit was. How was I going to make an impact? How was I going to give back to the industry that I always said helped raise me? And I just fell in love,” she says.

Above: Matter helped host professionals from nine countries during this summer’s International Master’s of Brand Advantages program.

Reservation required

No matter how many events Matter works or plans, she easily claims the Angus Convention as her favorite.

"It was natural for Danielle to take a leadership role in that event, because she has so many great relationships across team Angus and a great vision for how the brand can be a part of the event," Walenciak says. "Danielle has said for now and for always, she wants to keep it. And we're great with that."

Why lay claim to Angus Convention?

"That audience makes my heart skip a beat just because that's what I come from," Matter says.

Her family runs Seldom Rest Farms, a third-generation Angus show cattle and crop operation. Parents Scott and Elaine Foster and brother Andrew regularly participate in CAB- and American Angus Association®-related events.

"With CAB, the events are well-scripted, and they stay on track," Scott Foster says. "Danielle, along with the rest of the people she works with, make it happen. While it's going on, she's not very social. She's making it happen."

Matter and husband Michael are expecting a new addition to their family, and they celebrated when they learned the due date would be after this year's Angus Convention.

"It's nice to get to gather up with so many people that I think are the heroes of the world and try to give them a good experience," she says.

With her layered experiences, it makes sense that this gathering would be special. But how does her junior involvement come into play?



"I think a lot of Danielle's experiences through the junior board and Miss American Angus really translate to today because she had a broader perspective," says Walenciak, who also compliments Matter's public speaking abilities. "She'd been exposed to different ranches in the industry from traveling and various leadership opportunities."

Career bits and pieces

Giving back to the community that helped raise her comes in the form of farm tours with chefs and organizing other conference schedules. She also developed the online training program known as Certified Angus Beef University for foodservice distributors. The many projects throughout the year include CAB Annual Conference, International Masters of Brand Advantages and Foodservice Leaders Summit.

That Summit in particular brought Matter unique growth experiences. She contrasts it with CAB Annual Conference, an event welcoming all segments of the beef supply

chain from conception to consumption.

"Foodservice Leaders Summit is truly just our foodservice division.

Even more specifically, most of the audience are our specialists from our foodservice distribution partners," she says. "So you go from this wide-scoping audience to something much more targeted. But it's still almost a 250-person event every year."

She explains why she gladly accepts the challenge.

"Every single thing at Certified Angus Beef is a true team effort," she begins. "That's the coolest thing about it, but it [Foodservice Leaders Summit] does get to be something that I have a lot of ownership in. I get to see it through from start to finish, and that's pretty neat."

Then she gives a disclaimer: "Except this year, because I'll be nursing a baby."

The move home

Matter moved back to Michigan in 2017, much to the delight of her family, especially with a little one now on the way. One of the biggest changes in the planner's professional development was the transition from the brand's Wooster, Ohio, office to working from home.

Continued on page 184

Things That Matter More *continued from page 183*

“It was a learning curve,” she says. “It’s way different, but in every way it’s a blessing.”

If anything, it connects her more closely to why she began serving Angus cattlemen and women in the first place.

“There’s nothing quite like home,” she says. “I’m able to go over and see the cattle or to take my dad dinner in the field.

I’m able to help with our family sale and see the babies romping around right behind my parents’ back patio.”

She thinks others in the industry understand her decision to move, and Matter still makes it into Wooster — a community she loves — about one week of every month.

Walenciak recognizes that the young professional’s skills are top-notch. They help her stay very connected both with the beef community and those at CAB.

“She cares so much about each person she interacts with, and all of it is because she cares about doing a great job and she really passionately wants to represent Certified Angus Beef and the Angus breed very well,” Walenciak says.

The recognition Matter receives comes in different forms. In 2015, the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) recognized Matter as one of their “20 in their Twenties.”

At PCMA, Walenciak says, “There’s people that are very much on a meeting-planning path, while Danielle does bigger-picture content in planning.”

In fact, the young professional

did not have her eyes on meeting planning at all when she first came to work.

“I was at that moment starting college and figuring out what my fit was. How was I going to make an impact? How was I going to give back to the industry that I always said helped raise me? And I just fell in love.” – Danielle Matter

“She came to this company knowing that she wanted to work in marketing somehow for Certified Angus Beef,” Walenciak says.

“Danielle understands the content, so she’s not just planning what time

Defining characteristics

Her parents talk about the characteristics that helped their daughter achieve success first during her junior career and later at CAB. To begin, they name hard work, determination and stubbornness. Those were evident, for instance, when she completed a master’s degree as she continued to work full-time for the CAB brand.

“Luckily, she’s been one of those kids that’s had a lot of accomplishments throughout her young life,” Scott Foster says. “She’s goal-oriented and she reaches out for those goals.”

Matter’s most long-standing challenge has been with rheumatoid arthritis, but her mom says she even turned that into a positive opportunity.

“Danielle was diagnosed with arthritis at age 12 and had a lot of pain and bad days with it as an autoimmune disease,” Elaine Foster says. “And I think the fact that she persevered through it shows her determination. She would go to shows, be having flare-ups and just hold her head high. She actually became a spokesperson for the Rheumatoid Arthritis Foundation.”

Walenciak commented on how Matter handles her condition with grace.

“It’s not a limitation for her, but I had to go through a process of becoming more aware of it,” she says. “I know she’s going to work from sunup till the very end of an event, so I always tell her, ‘You have to pace yourself. Don’t



The short mottos in Matter’s office reminds her that people remember how she makes them feel. She wants to positively impact anyone coming into contact with her. Her dog Maizey seems to agree.

the coffee is out. She’s also planning the educational programming of the event itself.”

lift the 50-pound boxes. I know you could...' but I know what that would do to her body. And she would never ask for special treatment."

Matter's humble nature contributes to her work and overcoming roadblocks she faces in more ways than one, her supervisor explains.

"Something that truly impressed me when she started her career is that she wasn't afraid to ask questions," Walenciak says. "She would actually keep a list of questions that came up in meetings and terms she didn't understand. That's part of what allowed her to grow so much."

Family first

Similarly, Matter speaks humbly of the example of leadership and service in her family she witnessed growing up.

"We had all tried to make an

impact," she says. "My grandmother was an auxiliary president. Both my dad and brother were board members. We've all tried to make our impact on the Association, but we were just a little family farm, grazing some show cattle."



She enjoys the parallels between her family's values and those at CAB.

"We're a very faith-based company,

they always champion family first and you'll see our leadership team pitching in as much as anyone," she says.

So no matter what, Matter still revolves around family. A strong work ethic trickles down through this family. And that revolves around their cattle.

"I feel bad for kids who didn't get to grow up on a farm and didn't get to spend as much time with their parents. Working alongside them, traveling alongside them, loving on a newborn baby calf alongside them."

She continues, "I guess the dream was real, and it launched me into this better understanding of our industry as a whole, which was the greatest blessing because look where that has now taken me." **AJ**



Part of the third generation at Seldom Rest Farms, Matter helped with chores and began showing Angus cattle from an early age. Now, expecting her first child, she thinks, "How am I going to create those memories that they look back on and just beam about?"