

Gone Camping

Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference takes a new format.

Story & photos by Madi Baughman, editorial intern

The crackle of a campfire. A marshmallow toasted to perfection, topped with graham crackers and chocolate for a delicious s'more. A break from life's distractions to reconnect with nature and others on a deeper level.

National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members packed their bags and headed to Nebraska City, Neb., home of Arbor Day, Aug. 4-6 for Camp Angus. Hosted at Lied Lodge, participants were able to network with other members from across the nation; interact with the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) members, retiring and new; and focus on developing leadership skills to serve the future of the Angus breed.

Day 1

"We were welcomed through the door by green coats," said Allie Bieber, a junior member from Waukon, Iowa. "It was an exciting feeling, and I knew it was going to be a fun-filled week. I look forward to spending the next



few days with the green coats and the junior members."

After registering and checking into their rooms, junior members heard from Ronnie Green, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) chancellor.

He welcomed them to Camp Angus and applauded them for taking time to learn and grow during these difficult times.

"I've got a lot of fondness for the Angus Association," Green said, noting his personal history with the breed.

Tom Field, Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program director and fifth-generation cattleman, spoke with students about remaining diligent leaders during this

time in our nation's history.

"Do not lose sight of what you've been given, whether you call it blessing, luck or grace," Field said. "We are fortunate to be in this country."

He encouraged Angus juniors to be the generation of builders, both in the ag industry and in life.

Bringing a newer side of the industry to life, Hannah Esch, Oak Barn Beef founder and fifth-generation rancher, offered up the challenges and benefits of starting a direct-to-consumer beef operation.

"You have to plan at least 24



NJAA members sang their hearts out to finish Night 1 with a riff-off competition.

months ahead of time in order to have a product in your freezer from conception to consumption,” Esch said. “It’s a really challenging and time-consuming process.”

The 22-year-old UNL graduate recognized a passion for bringing people closer to the farm from a young age, and she decided to make a career out of it. While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to the ag industry, she noted an increase in sales for her operation.

While passing the torch to the new team of NJAB officers, Dylan Denny, retiring NJAB Foundation director, urged junior members to make the most of their time in the NJAA, noting he had no idea the incredible path the Association would lead him on when he started as a young member.

To allow junior members to network and interact in an entertaining way, the newly elected, current and retiring NJAB members took turns facilitating icebreakers, which included intense games of tic-tac-toe, bubble-blowing relays and even a “riff-off” singing competition.

Before sending members to bed, Caroline Cowles, retiring NJAB communications director, offered her thoughts for junior members. She told the story of her Angus journey, from a black Angus heifer named Chip all the way to serving on the NJAB with her best friends.

This included leaving members with her signature statement from Cory Watt: “Always do your best, and let God do the rest.”

Day 2

Campers began Day 2 with an early-morning trip to Bruning Farms, a fourth-generation family farm raising registered Angus and

commercial cattle at Bruning, Neb.

Split up into groups, Camp Angus participants were able to tour the operation while talking to herd managers and Reiss Bruning, one of the owners of the farm.

The Brunings use progressive methods such as artificial insemination (AI), embryo transfer (ET), tissue sampling and genomically enhanced expected progeny differences (EPDs), which allowed Angus juniors to see that operations can look different all across the United States.

Once back at Lied Lodge, participants split into four groups to attend workshops conducted by NJAB members. The four sessions focused on skills such as communication, goal-setting and teamwork.

“In one particular workshop today, the ‘green coats’ talked about how everyone has their own measure of success, and it’s a function of



On Day 2 of Camp Angus, junior members tackled the Arbor Day-themed tree course. In the tradition of LEAD, Camp Angus provided opportunity to meet fellow juniors and to develop life skills.

individuality,” said Gordon Clark, a junior from Gretna, Va. “In another workshop today, Baxter Knapp talked about how only you can achieve your goals. You have to be your accountability partner in order to get to where you want to be in life.”

Junior members then got the opportunity to explore the Arbor Day Farm Tree Adventure ropes course filled with obstacles, an airborne Treetop Village and trampoline, and a trail through the forest. After this, they settled in for dinner and games, campfire-style.

Keegan Cassady, retiring NJAB membership director, gave her final thoughts, speaking of her Angus journey and friendships made to last a lifetime. At the conclusion of her speech, members enjoyed horseshoes, cornhole and the opportunity to dance the night away with line dances taught by a professional instructor.

Continued on page 154

LEAD change

In a typical year, Angus juniors from across the nation would have attended the annual Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference this summer. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) and the Events and Education Department at the American Angus Association had to adapt this well-attended event from its initial venue in Orlando, Fla. Camp Angus, hosted Aug. 4-6, 2020, in Nebraska City, Neb., served as an enjoyable alternative.

The objective of Camp Angus was to provide juniors with opportunities to meet fellow Angus youth, engage with industry leaders and take part in activities promoting growth and personal development, said Madeline Bauer, events coordinator for the American Angus Association. She spoke about unlocking the potential each junior has within them to succeed.

"Camp Angus was a success as we could see the passion and fire that are in these juniors' eyes," Bauer said. "The goal was to ignite that fire, and we hope the juniors keep the flame going as they navigate through their junior years."

Paige Lemenager, an Angus junior from Illinois, expressed her excitement to still be able to attend an event like Camp Angus in a year when opportunities have been limited.

"I was thrilled to have another chance to see my Angus family," said Lemenager. "After seeing a location change, I was proud to be a part of this association that stepped up to host such a fun event in these uncertain times."

Lemenager said she is confident that the knowledge and relationships gained at Camp Angus will serve her well in the future, especially as a young Angus breeder. While she said she hopes to be able to attend a traditional LEAD next year, Camp Angus served as an alternative opportunity for juniors to connect, learn and grow with fellow Angus friends in a summer when events of its kind have been few and far between.

Editor's note: Adapted from an article by Peyton Schmitt, 2020 Angus communications intern.

Finishing the night off, members gathered around the campfire to enjoy s'mores and listen to Baxter Knapp's final thoughts as retiring NJAB vice chairman. Knapp reminisced on times throughout his NJAA career and urged members to take advantage of their time in the association.

"The juniors of the NJAA never cease to amaze me with their passion and devotion to the breed," said Walker McDermott, newly elected NJAB member. "Ending the night around the campfire and building friendships that will last a lifetime was the perfect ending to an amazing day."

Day 3

The last day of Camp Angus started with a heartfelt sentiment from Grady Dickerson, retiring NJAB leadership director. With Dickerson's family being historic in the Angus breed, he spoke about the pride he feels to have grown and represented the breed as a junior board member.

For one of their last activities, junior members participated in three different breakout sessions with industry professionals: Sullivan Supply Inc., Vytelle and Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB). Each session allowed juniors



The six retiring NJAB members soaked up their last days in their green coats together.

to gain insight into potential careers within the beef industry.

To close Camp Angus, retiring NJAB Chairman Tyler Bush pushed junior members to put all their heart and passion into *The Business Breed* and its members.

If you give everything into the Angus family, Bush said, you will get more out of the Association and the people than you ever expected.

"As a Board member, the last day was so sweet seeing all the juniors grow as people and get in touch with their leadership styles, as well as develop new friendships that will last a lifetime," said Reagan Skow, NJAB membership director. "I'm so grateful to have been a part of helping nourish these young adults into even better people at the end of a fun and beneficial week."

Hugs were exchanged, tears were shed, and everyone went their separate ways at the conclusion of the camp.

The memories made, laughs shared and lessons learned at Camp Angus will continue to reside with junior members long after their time as a member of the NJAA is over. **AJ**

Editor's note: Madi Baughman was the summer 2020 Angus Media editorial intern.



On Day 3, juniors listened to informative sessions from industry professionals.