

The Future of the Beef Industry Lies Within its Producers



Twenty cattlemen and women experienced beef's pasture-to-plate cycle.

by *Kelli Fulkerson, API intern*

Twenty young cattlemen and women gathered at the American Angus Association headquarters in Saint Joseph, Mo., June 18-21 to kick off the fifth annual Beef Leaders Institute (BLI).

The program is designed for Association members, age 25-45, to cultivate leadership within the beef industry. BLI offers participants the opportunity to see and experience all segments of the beef industry firsthand. This year's participants toured feedyards, processing facilities, packing

plants and retail locations in Nebraska and Iowa.

"If you look at the United States beef industry total inventory, Angus really has a large percentage of that total number," shared

Bryce Schumann, CEO of the Association, in an interview during BLI. "This week is really vital for the future of the Angus breed. There are 20 young Angus producers here to learn about the industry. We encourage all of them to learn from one another, share personal experiences and, most of all, enjoy this time together."

Participants have the opportunity to spend a day at the Association's headquarters in Saint Joseph. During their visit they receive an overview of the

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► The BLI Class of 2012 tours the American Angus Association headquarters in Saint Joseph, Mo. Here the class is learning a little about the Angus breed's history.



► Bryce Schumann welcomes the class. Members had a chance to hear an update on the long-range strategic plan for the American Angus Association.

Association's entities — Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), the Angus Foundation, and Angus Productions Inc. (API), as well as an in-depth look at the Association's core programs and services.

"Being able to spend time at the Association was very beneficial to me as a breeder. I was able to ask questions about various programs and services that are offered to me as an Angus producer," explained Vince Bickel, Gordon, Neb. "I left feeling extremely proud to call myself an Angus producer."

Doing the heavy lifting

The participants' BLI learning experience actually began a month before setting foot on Missouri soil. Each person was assigned a homework lesson to complete before arriving in Saint Joseph. The assignment included goal setting, a letter to self, a retail survey and a signed commitment to learn. The purpose of these activities was to ensure a commitment from participants in becoming the future leaders of the beef industry.

As part of their homework, participants were also required to enroll and complete the Masters of Beef Advocacy (MBA) program degree. Darren Williams, executive director of communications for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), also known as the "dean of students" for the MBA program, joined the group at the Association to discuss the course and how to utilize the information that was given to them through the six different online courses.

"The MBA program is the way to equip cattlemen with the knowledge to go out and answer any question that a consumer may have about beef production," said Williams. "There was a need for a nationwide network of grassroots advocates. The MBA program produces just that."

Cheryl Day, Cerro Gordo, Ill., agreed. "It is important to incorporate the tools given to



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► Attending the fifth annual Beef Leaders Institute are (front row, from left) **Cheryl Day**, Cerro Gordo, Ill.; **Mercedes Danekas**, Wilton, Calif.; **Alison Allegrucci**, Prairie Village, Kan.; **Kelli Fulkerson**, API summer intern; (second row, from left) **David Uhrig**, Hermosa, S.D.; **Chris Styles**, Brentford, S.D.; **Scott Bush**, Britton, S.D.; **Vince Bickle**, Gordon, Neb.; (third row, from left) **Blair Carney**, Adair, Iowa; **Dustin Carter**, Vermillion, S.D.; **Devyn Ballagh**, Burwell, Neb.; **Chris Miller**, Mabel, Minn.; **Andy Mindemann**, Oconomowoc, Wis.; **David Holden**, Red Bluff, Calif.; **Cody Washam**, Pierce City, Mo.; (back row, from left) **Brock Foxhoven**, Crofton, Neb.; **Spencer Jones**, Boone, Iowa; **Luke Bowman**, Greens Fork, Ind.; **Daniel Ogren**, Langford, S.D.; and **Rob Adams**, Union Springs, Ala.

me during the MBA program to construct an informative message to deliver to consumers. I can become a more effective spokesperson by listening first, providing meaningful information and keeping the concerns of the consumer most important."

Industry tours

After their time at the Association, the participants boarded a bus and headed north to attend their two-day tour across three

states. Stops during the 2012 tour included Gregory Feedlot, Tabor, Iowa; Tyson's beef processing plant in Dakota City, Neb.; a Whole Foods Market in Omaha, Neb.; Cargill Meat Solutions, a value-added processing plant in Nebraska City, Neb.; and Sysco, a food distributor in Lincoln, Neb.

"It was very interesting to see all the aspects of the beef industry," said Brock Foxhoven from Crofton, Neb. "I see the

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► National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Director of Communications Darren Williams joined the class to beef up its knowledge of the Masters of Beef Advocacy (MBA) program.



► David Trowbridge, manager of Gregory Feedlot, discusses the everyday procedures of operating a feedyard.



► Class members were able to see Gregory Feedlot's unique working system.

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industry through the filter of my cattle and my operation, but don't get the chance to see it through the eyes of a feeder or packing plant. BLI expanded my point of view to see the whole picture."

Tom Brink, senior vice president and chief risk officer of JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding LLC, joined the group in Nebraska City at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. There, he led a discussion entitled "Industry Perspective: Feeders, Consumers & Beyond." He walked the group through several different marketing grids, discussed breakevens and suggested ways producers could reach maximum profit.

"As producers, there are always those tough questions you want to ask about our industry. BLI is the prime time to do that," explained Devyn Ballagh, Burwell, Neb. "Being able to visit with industry professionals and tour their facilities really gave me an overall industry perspective."

Deeper understanding

After four days, with 20 producers from 11 different states, there was one message that rang loud for everyone: "We are all part of the beef industry, and we will do whatever we

can to ensure a bright future for upcoming generations."

"We are the voice for this industry. Now, we must share our message," said Chris Styles, Brentford, S.D. "Using the tools BLI had to offer me makes a world of difference as I advocate for the industry we all love."

The educational event, which is limited to 20 attendees each year, is hosted by the Association and funded by the Angus Foundation as part of its mission to support continuing education, youth and research. The BLI class of 2012 consisted of Rob Adams, Union Springs, Ala.; Alison Allegrucci, Prairie Village, Kan.; Devyn Ballagh, Burwell, Neb.; Vince Bickel, Gordon, Neb.; Luke Bowman, Greens Fork, Ind.; Scott Bush, Britton, S.D.; Blair Carney, Adair, Iowa; Dustin Carter, Vermillion, S.D.; Mercedes Danekas, Wilton, Calif.; Cheryl Day, Cerro Gordo, Ill.; Brock Foxhoven, Crofton, Neb.; David Holden, Red Bluff, Calif.; Clint Hunter, Fair Grove, Mo.; Spencer Jones, Boone, Iowa; Chris Miller, Mabel, Minn.; Andy Mindemann, Oconomowoc, Wis.; Daniel Ogren, Langford, S.D.; Chris Styles, Brentford, S.D.; David Uhrig, Hermosa, S.D.; and Cody Washam, Pierce City, Mo.



► Most producers don't explore the options grocery stores offer consumers. During BLI, the class visited Whole Foods Market of Omaha, Neb., to explore a trendy consumer shopping experience.

For more information on the BLI, visit www.angus.org or contact Shelia Stannard at [sstannard@angus.org](mailto:ssannard@angus.org) or 816-383-5152. Applications to participate were due March 1 this year, so mark your calendar and follow your *Angus Journal*, *Angus Beef Bulletin*, and Angus e-List to watch for next year's deadline.

