Scholarships Support Beef's Future

Six students earn scholarship assistance for higher education.

*by **Katy Kemp**, Certified Angus Beef LLC*

The *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®) brand awarded $26,000 to six students for their community and beef industry leadership and achievements.

Since its inception in 1999, the Colvin Scholarship Fund has supported the education of nearly 50 future leaders in agriculture and animal sciences. These scholarships honor Louis M. "Mick" Colvin, CAB's founding executive director of 21 years.

The scholarship emulates Colvin's role in making dreams a reality and inspiring others to do their best. For 2015, the annual prizes increased from $20,000 to $26,000 to award higher cash amounts to deserving students. Each of the six awards is $1,000 higher to keep pace with rising education costs, and thanks to the generosity of partners in the program.

Undergraduate applicants were asked to identify what role science and genetics play in delivering more predictable beef sizing and a high-quality eating experience.

Elizabeth Nixon, top undergraduate scholarship winner, said genomic testing to help find superior animals in a herd can increase predictability and consistency. The Oklahoma State University junior wrote, "The availability of information GeneMax provides is remarkable."

Nixon pointed out that the GeneMax® (GMX) Focus™ test from Zoetis can help identify females in the herd with better carcass genetics, serving as a key selection tool for commercial producers in targeting higher quality.

After graduation, the dual major in animal science and agricultural communications wants to work in communications for the beef industry.

Garrett Kays foresees beef production benefiting from science and technology.

"The most significant outcome that science and genetics have accomplished is enabling us to be more efficient with our dwindling supply of beef cattle," he wrote. The agricultural economics junior and $5,000 Colvin Scholarship winner plans to pursue a master's degree in agriculture economics and public policy from Cornell University.

He listed the challenge of using feedstuffs more efficiently and producing more high-quality beef with less land as a need for technology and science to address.

Kansas State University senior and $4,000 winner Lindsay Upperman sees genomic testing to identify genetics that fit each environment as the way of the future.

"With new genetic technologies, I believe we can get much closer to a more consistent size in the cow herd, while still making improvements in both marbling and tenderness," she wrote, adding that selection pressure on economic traits and carcass quality can help raise beef with predictable cut size and quality.

Sierra Jepsen used her experience on the Ohio State University livestock judging team to emphasize the role genetics play in the beef industry. The agricultural business junior and $3,000 winner wrote, "Through the use of expected progeny differences, artificial insemination, embryo transfer technology, sexed semen and many other technological advancements, we can see science at work to develop the next generation of beef cattle."

Texas Tech University senior Kaitlyn Farmer, who plans to attend veterinary school after graduation, wrote, "The industry's ability to maintain consistency lies in our capacity to predict each calf's merit and feed the calf to its full potential." The $2,000 scholarship recipient said the key to consistency is genetic selection using "EPDs and genetic markers" to increase accuracy and predictability.

Graduate award

The Colvin Scholarship Fund began its graduate awards in 2012, opening doors to

anyone in a recognized, full-time masters or doctoral program related to high-quality beef production.

Megan Webb, animal science doctoral candidate at South Dakota State University, received the $6,000 graduate-level award. Her research focuses on the impact of maternal protein restriction in mid- to late gestation on gene expression, offspring growth, carcass composition and meat quality. Her findings could have a significant impact on the role fetal nutrition plays in subsequent carcass quality.

Webb wrote, "This research is critical to expanding the beef industry by improving

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our ability to consistently produce high-value carcasses and meat." She identified previous research efforts that focus on postpartum nutrition, but her study will help understand gene expression and management during gestation.

As the top scholarship recipients, Nixon and Webb also each received an all-expense-paid trip to the 2015 CAB Annual Conference, Sept. 24-26 in San Antonio, Texas. There they will interact with leaders

in the production, packaging, retail and foodservice areas of the beef industry.

Launched in 1978 and owned by nearly 25,000 American Angus Association members, CAB is the largest branded beef program in the world. Fiscal year 2014 saw an eighth consecutive sales record with 882 million pounds sold through nearly 17,000 licensed partners in more than 46 countries. Learn more about the brand at *www.certifiedangusbeef.com,* or access producer resources at *www.cabpartners.com.*