

# Continuing the Legacy

Woodlawn Farms creates record-breaking educational endowment.

by Meghan Soderstrom

**T**hough traditions are continued every day, it takes something truly special and rare to create a legacy. After celebrating 125 years in the Angus business, it's safe to say that Woodlawn Farms — America's oldest Angus herd — has earned the honor of being called a legacy.

The Creston, Ill.-based herd dispersed in May 2005, but thanks to the generosity of fourth-generation owner Lewis "Blanford" Pierce, the legacy of Woodlawn Farms will continue to positively affect the lives of Angus youth for years to come. Pierce and his wife, Joan, partnered with the Angus Foundation to establish a record-setting \$25,000 educational endowment — the largest educational endowment ever funded by a single Angus breeder.

The endowment was created at the Foundation's 25th Silver Anniversary Celebration, in conjunction with the 2005 North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Ky. The endowment will annually provide an educational scholarship to Angus youth involved in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA).

The Pierces selected the Foundation as their beneficiary because of the

organization's goal to provide Angus youth with opportunities to become educated leaders. By awarding scholarships and supporting NJAA activities, donors such as the Pierces help the Foundation work to accomplish its educational goals.

A longtime supporter of the NJAA, Pierce says he couldn't think of a more fitting way to invest in the Angus breed's future than by encouraging its youth to pursue an education.

"In today's business environment, I feel that it is particularly important for our young leaders to pursue a college education. Continued education, such as a master's degree, is also becoming increasingly important," Pierce says. "I believe so many more kids would go to college if they had the financial opportunity. One reason why Joan and I wanted to establish this endowment was to help provide Angus youth with that financial opportunity.

"Joan and I feel really good about making

this donation to the Foundation," he continues. "Those positive feelings make it very easy for us to be proponents of the Angus Foundation to other people and encourage them to donate, too. We strongly believe in the Foundation's goals and want to continue doing our part to help the Angus Foundation, especially the youth."

Pierce is quick to credit the source of his ability to provide this support. "One thing that I really appreciate about Woodlawn Farms is that I am the fourth generation to retire as a direct result of the Angus cow. There has never been any other family income, and I'm very proud of that. I owe a lot to the Angus cow."

## Evolutionary thinking

The idea for a gift of this magnitude didn't happen overnight. It was an evolutionary process that began approximately five years ago.

"Our original plan was to donate the 2006 Foundation Heifer Package at the 100th anniversary of the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) and the 125th anniversary of Woodlawn Farms," Pierce says.

He says it appealed to him that those landmark anniversaries fell in the same year



PHOTO BY SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL

► "We strongly believe in the Foundation's goals and want to continue doing our part to help the Angus Foundation, especially the youth," says Blanford Pierce (center) of Woodlawn Farms. Pierce and wife Joan (left center) established the largest educational endowment ever funded by a single Angus breeder through the Angus Foundation.

and that the funds generated by the heifer's sale would be used to support Angus youth. Pierce says he thought of the heifer donation as a way for him to give back to the breed that has given his family so much for more than a century.

Then, in early 2005, it became apparent that it was time for the Woodlawn herd to disperse.

"My decision to disperse this herd was not made lightly, and only after much deliberation," he explains. "Age was a factor for both Joan and myself, along with some family land-ownership issues.

"By the time we decided to have the dispersal, I decided that the meaning wouldn't be there to donate the heifer," Pierce says. "I was really happy to learn about the other options in donating to the Angus Foundation."

Pierce says finding those other options was important because he strongly believes in the value of the NJAA, as well as the value of a college education.

"You can't believe some of the people that I have known that started out in the junior Angus program. They matured in that program and became great young people. The junior Angus program amazes me," he says enthusiastically.

"I wanted to find a way that my money would be a good investment in the individual. I wanted to help make a better person out of someone, and the junior program and an education can do that," Pierce explains.

"The longevity of the endowment was the selling point versus the donation of the heifer," he says. "The endowment's scholarships will go on forever and ever. It perpetuates the name of the farm and our contributions to the Angus breed, while helping kids go to college.

"It also honors my ancestors, whose perseverance kept this farm going, enabling me to take it to the 125-year landmark anniversary," Pierce continues.

### A unique gift

The first scholarship to be generated by the Woodlawn Farms endowment will be available starting with the 2006-2007 academic year, and the first recipient will be recognized at the 2006 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Indianapolis, Ind. Students may apply for the scholarship using the Angus Foundation's standard

scholarship application, which is due May 1.

Pierce says he made two important requests in the scholarship's selection criteria. First, he didn't want the scholarship restricted to students from Illinois; second, students are eligible to win only once. "These terms were

set to provide more opportunities for more students," he says.

Foundation  
Director of

Development Milford Jenkins says this scholarship is "unique because it really is the gift that keeps on giving." Permanent endowment funds are invested in a combination of equities and fixed assets within the Foundation's investment policies and guidelines that strive for a total return to address both short-term and long-term objectives. Only the annual interest revenue generated by the endowment is available to fund the annual scholarship, and any unused

earnings will be returned to the endowment, helping it to grow throughout the years.

"This gift will be preserved in perpetuity," Jenkins says. "The Pierces' generosity will always be remembered, as this endowment will continue to provide educational opportunities for Angus youth many, many years in the future.

"The Angus Foundation

will always owe a debt of gratitude to Blanford and Joan," he continues. "Their generous gift will have an indelible impact on numerous lives of Angus youth while simultaneously carrying on the legacy of Woodlawn Farms forever."

### Encouraging others

Pierce says he believes that showing generosity encourages other people to be generous in their support, too.

"I think if you do something today for a young person, they will always remember. Forty years from now, regardless of their career choice, they will remember what they got out of the junior Angus program and what the scholarships did for them. Then, they will be inclined to contribute to this great cause, too.

"I want to do everything I can to support the Angus Foundation and encourage others to do the same," Pierce says.

To donate to the Angus Foundation, visit [www.angusfoundation.org](http://www.angusfoundation.org) or contact Jenkins at (816) 383-5100.



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## Creating the Woodlawn legacy

When Angus cattle first arrived at Woodlawn Farms in 1881, the United States had just passed the centennial mark. The Angus breed was barely half a century old, and the Woodlawn acreage in Creston, Ill., had been in the Pierce family only a few years.

B.R. Pierce founded the Woodlawn Angus herd with the purchase of one bull and three heifers that had been imported to Quebec, Canada, from Scotland, says fourth-generation Woodlawn owner Lewis "Blanford" Pierce.

In 1900, Woodlawn Farms attracted the interest of cattle producers everywhere, Blanford says. Advance, a steer bred and shown by the Pierce family, won grand champion at the first International Livestock Show in Chicago, Ill., and sold for a 17-year-record price of \$1.50 per pound.

"It was the great carcass characteristics of the Angus cattle that caught cattlemen's attention in 1900," Blanford says. It was also that year "America's foundation Angus sire" was born.

"The birth of Black Woodlawn ushered in a new era in the Angus breed," he says. "He can be directly traced to an *unbelievable* number of Angus bulls and international champions."

Historian and author W.J. McKeag agrees. "The blood of Black Woodlawn has probably been intensified in more herds and animals than that of any other one bull in the history of Aberdeen-Angus cattle breeding in America," McKeag wrote in his book *Woodlawn Farm: The First 100 Years*.

Although the success may have started with Black Woodlawn, it certainly didn't end there.

"Along with our sister operation, West Woodlawn, we had a combined 24 championships in the pen bull shows down in the yards at the National Western," Blanford says. "Exhibiting cattle at shows was always a way of life for this family, and we were recognized at the 2006 National Western as being one of the oldest exhibitors in the history of that show."

Throughout the years, Woodlawn Farms claimed numerous national and international championships and developed a reputation for genetic excellence. Although the Woodlawn herd dispersed in 2005, its influence continues to be seen in Angus herds across America.

