



New Perspectives

Young Angus breeders seize opportunity to learn at California LEAD Conference.

Story & photos by *Crystal Young*



► Chardonnay grapes at Silveira Bros.

National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members from 34 states and Canada participated in the LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) Conference Aug. 6-9 in San Francisco, Calif. The 184 youth and advisors gained insight into the environmental and animal-welfare challenges facing California while developing leadership and team-building skills. “The Golden Gate to Opportunity” was this year’s theme for LEAD, which is funded through the Angus Foundation and designed for NJAA members 14-21 years old.

The event kicked off with speaker Randy Perry, California State University, Fresno, who discussed the diversity of California’s agriculture and current issues that face California producers. Perry emphasized the need for young people to be agricultural industry advocates.

Many of Perry’s points were demonstrated as participants toured a 3,000-head dairy; an almond-manufacturing plant;

Vintage Angus Ranch’s, Modesto, Calif., embryo facility; and Silveira Bros. of Firebaugh, Calif. The tours provided new perspectives for many attendees who learned about a variety of crops and farming techniques with which they were not familiar.

Rick Blanchard, Silveira Bros., keyed in on these techniques, discussing the importance of optimizing water usage on their diversified farming operation.

“In the past year we switched from flood irrigation for our almonds, grapes and pastureland to underground systems. The switch has allowed us to use 10% of the water we did in the past,” he said.

The day of agricultural tours ended with an evening of fun featuring a band and a barbecue, all hosted by the Schnoor Sisters, Chowchilla, Calif. The six recently elected National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Board members were also introduced. They challenged participants to take advantage of



► Junior Board member Kirbe Schnoor gives a presentation on how we help educate the public on animal welfare issues.

new opportunities and to be the leaders agriculture needs.

Two special speakers gave attendees the inspiration to meet this challenge. Motivational speaker Justin Lookadoo, McKinney, Texas, reminded everyone that their lives have an effect on others, whether they know it or not. He questioned the attendees, “Are you doing the best you can with the abilities and opportunities you have been given?”

Scott Vernon, San Luis Obispo, Calif., a leader in the agriculture advocacy movement, reminded everyone that they need to be cheerleaders to help ag through challenges.

“Our friends are the ones that know what is important to us, and want to be able to help you succeed,” he said. Vernon also shared his efforts on educating the public through his program, “I Love Farmers ... They Feed My Soul,” which has gained national attention and relies on youth perspectives to tell the story of agriculture.

The NJAA Board of Directors conducted four workshops that covered using expected progeny differences (EPDs) as a genetic selection tool, as well as animal welfare, an American Angus Association version of trivial pursuit and a dance workshop.

Sightseeing capped off the week with a trip to the beach, the Golden Gate Bridge, Fisherman’s Wharf and Pier 39.

LEAD provides an opportunity for youth and advisors to exchange ideas, become stronger leaders, and build lifelong friendships with Angus enthusiasts from across the country. For more information about the NJAA and its programs, visit www.angus.org or call 816-383-5100.



► Above: Delegates enjoyed seeing the diversity in California agriculture. DeJager is a 3,000-head family-owned dairy.



► Above: Amanda Schnoor explains how the almond develops to Ron and Myki Simek, Canyon Creek Angus. The Simeks were honored as the Honorary Foundation Award recipients for their dedication to the junior program.



► Right: Brad Schnoor cooks steaks at the Schnoor Sisters stop.

► Below: Tanner Lindorf, Mich.; Lauren Grimes, Ohio; Ashley Judge, Ohio; and Justin Kennedy, Mich.; mark their spot by the Pacific Ocean.

