

► A total of 193 NJAA members and enthusiasts from 32 states and Canada were able to experience the LEAD conference.



Angus Youth Participate in LEAD Conference

National Junior Angus Association members travel to Fort Collins, Colo., for networking and leadership training.

Story by **Carrie Heitman**, American Angus Association; photos by **Katie Allen**, Angus Foundation

The 2012 Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference is one for the record books. Whitewater rafting, a challenging high-ropes course, and top livestock industry speakers made the Rocky Mountain landscape an ideal setting to bring Angus juniors together.

The event, themed “Peak Performance,” was Aug. 2-5 in Fort Collins, Colo. Thanks to support from the Angus Foundation, 193 National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members and enthusiasts from 32 states and Canada were able to experience the leadership conference. LEAD is an opportunity specifically for members 14-21 years old.

“LEAD is one of the best events the NJAA offers youth,” says Kelli Retallick of Glen Haven, Wis. “The conference gets kids out of the showring and into a room full of youth from across the country who are all passionate about the same thing — the Angus breed.”

Retallick is a member of the NJAA Board of Directors, elected during the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) each summer. The junior board kicked off the LEAD conference with team-building activities and presented various workshops throughout the four-day event.

Learning from peers and professionals

Another featured speaker was former junior board member Britney Creamer of Montrose, Colo., who shared her recent journey to Uruguay and what the cattle business is like in South America. The first night of the conference, participants enjoyed hypnotist Al Snyder, whose talents entertained the crowd with plenty of laughter.

A stop at the Colorado State University (CSU) Ropes Challenge Course gave juniors the chance to experience the importance of building trust and communication skills with their team members. Climbing a rock wall and ropes nearly 30 feet from the ground had many juniors facing their fear of heights and encouraging each other every step of the way.

“These types of activities allow juniors to realize that you need a team and leadership

skills to get almost anywhere in life,” says Robin Ruff, American Angus Association director of junior activities. “It’s a whole lot more fun while letting them just be kids.”

That team spirit continued while hitting the Cache La Poudre River for whitewater rafting, a first for many on the trip.

“When I heard the trip included whitewater rafting, I knew this LEAD conference was one I couldn’t miss,” says participant Justin Mauss of Ash Grove, Mo. “But the real adventure for me was touring and learning from some of the most respected ranchers and agriculture professionals in the Angus breed.”

The LEAD conference educates juniors about the breed that ties them all together, Angus. Participants heard from Ryan Peterson, Leachman Cattle of Colorado in Wellington, Colo., on how Angus genetics can transform a cow herd. Heather Hays of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) spoke about the popular branded beef program, joined by Jeff Harvey of Lombardi Bros. Meats, Denver, Colo., who shared how CAB helped the specialty meats company survive during tough economic times.

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► Juniors had a great time getting to know one another during the first evening's icebreakers.

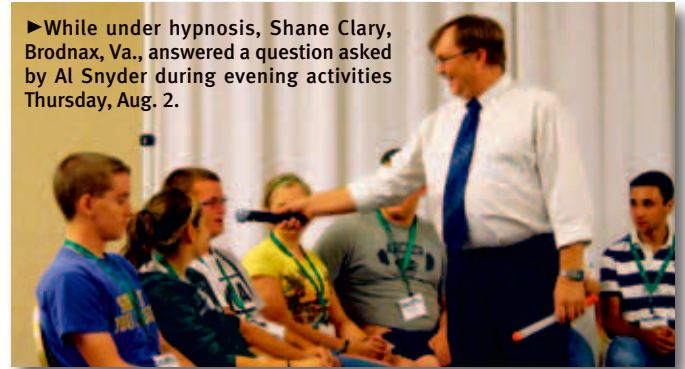


► One of the icebreakers involved juniors attaching balloons on a string to their feet and trying to pop others' balloons while preventing theirs from being popped.



PHOTO BY SCOTT JOHNSON, AMERICAN ANGUS ASS'N

► Attendees participated in the Game of Life workshop presented by the NJAA Board of Directors.



► While under hypnosis, Shane Clary, Brodnax, Va., answered a question asked by Al Snyder during evening activities Thursday, Aug. 2.



► Former NJAA Board Chairman Britney Creamer of Montrose, Colo., shared information about her recent journey to Uruguay and what the cattle business is like in South America.



► Nathan Eagleburger, Buffalo, Mo., sang for the crowd on the command of hypnotist Al Snyder.



► Nancy Ann Bickham (center), Saint Francisville, La., played a veterinarian delivering kittens while under hypnosis during the first day of the LEAD conference. Savannah Schaefer (left), Nehawka, Neb., and Katlyn Tunstill (right), Fayetteville, Ark., enjoyed watching the group under hypnosis.



► Al Snyder entertained the crowd of juniors with plenty of laughter.



► NJAA directors posed after a marriage talk show-themed skit they presented to all LEAD participants Thursday evening.

A favorite for many, Temple Grandin spent time with the junior members while at the CSU campus and discussed techniques that can make them better stewards to their animals. The CSU Agricultural Research, Development and Education Center staff was on-hand to visit with LEAD participants and served lunch prepared by the CSU meat lab.

Touring area Angus operations

The LEAD conference included tours at Aristocrat Angus Ranch, Platteville, Colo.; Rocky Mountain Sire Services Inc., Bennett, Colo.; and Spruce Mountain Ranch, Larkspur, Colo.

While at Aristocrat, juniors toured facilities and listened to Tim Holt of CSU explain high-altitude pulmonary hypertension in cattle. Juniors then traveled to Rocky Mountain Sire Services, where they

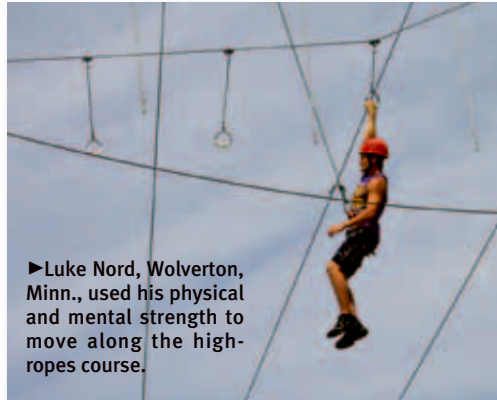
were able to view popular sires on display and learn about the operation, from semen collection to storage. Tours ended with dinner and entertainment at Spruce Mountain Ranch. Holt put on a magic show for the juniors, who were also able to view cattle across the vast ranch spanning the mountain valley.

“The Angus Foundation is proud to financially support the LEAD conference for Angus juniors each year,” says Milford



PHOTO BY SCOTT JOHNSON, AMERICAN ANGUS ASS'N

► Connections were made and teambuilding was evident among LEAD participants during the CSU Ropes Challenge Course stop Friday.



► Luke Nord, Wolverton, Minn., used his physical and mental strength to move along the high-ropes course.



► Sara DeYoung, Snohomish, Wash., prepared to walk a rope on the high-ropes portion of the CSU Ropes Challenge Course.



► Lauren Jernas, Knox, Ind., appears focused during her rock-wall climb.



► LEAD participants Luke Nord, Wolverton, Minn., and Kyrsten Retherford, Indianapolis, Ind., smiled big after completing a very challenging climb as part of a team-building activity.

► Left: NJAA Director Kelli Retallick, Glen Haven, Wis., confidently walked a rope high in the air at the CSU Ropes Challenge Course.



► Juniors take a short break to visit and network with one another.



PHOTO BY SCOTT JOHNSON, AMERICAN ANGUS ASS'N

► Left: Angus Foundation President Milford Jenkins and crew took on the Cache La Poudre River Friday, Aug. 3. The whitewater rafting was a highlight of the 2012 LEAD conference for many juniors.


► Right: Temple Grandin made a surprise guest appearance at the CSU Agricultural Research, Development and Education Center stop Saturday morning. Grandin discussed low-stress cattle handling.



Jenkins, Angus Foundation president. “These youth are able to network with one another while learning more about the Angus breed through visiting elite ranches. This growing and learning will undeniably help them become advocates for the Angus breed in the future.”

The 2012 LEAD Conference ended with two speakers who encouraged participants to put their leadership skills to use. A speaker from Rachel’s Challenge shared the story of

Rachel Scott, a victim of the 1999 Columbine high school shootings, and how students can make a positive impact by looking for the best in others, dreaming big, choosing positive influences, speaking with kindness, and starting their own chain reaction. Motivational speaker Andrew McCrea encouraged juniors to take what they’ve learned from the event and put it into practice in their own schools, communities and junior associations.

For more information about LEAD, contact the NJAA at 816-383-5100 or visit www.angus.org/njaa. 

Editor’s Note: *Carrie Heitman is communications coordinator for the American Angus Association. Katie Allen is director of marketing and public relations for the Angus Foundation. Video highlights from the LEAD Conference are available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yaWiZEFh0I.*

►Aristocrat Angus Ranch, Platteville, Colo., served as a mid-day LEAD conference stop Saturday.



►Left: CSU’s Tim Holt explained to NJAA members about high-altitude pulmonary hypertension at Aristocrat Angus Ranch.

►Below: LEAD participants learned about forages used for cattle in the high-altitude environment at Aristocrat Angus Ranch.



PHOTO BY SCOTT JOHNSON, AMERICAN ANGUS ASS’N

►Juniors learned about semen storage at Rocky Mountain Sire Services Inc., Bennett, Colo.

►Right: LEAD participants read pedigree data for bulls displayed at Rocky Mountain Sire Services Inc.



►Above: Spruce Mountain Ranch, Larkspur, Colo., was the final LEAD stop and provided breathtaking views of Angus cattle grazing near the mountains.



►Left: Prior to dinner at Spruce Mountain Ranch, NJAA members were able to walk around the ranch and view its beautiful facilities and cattle on display.



►Left: Jennifer Ewing, Rushville, Ill., assists Tim Holt with a magic show trick involving a deck of cards. The magic show took place at Spruce Mountain Ranch Saturday, Aug. 4.

