

Sights, Sounds and Smells of Seattle



Junior Angus members travel to Washington to experience agriculture in the Northwest.

Story & photos by **Nicole Lane**, editorial intern

The smell of cow organs that hung in the air of the warm hotel conference room didn't keep National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members away. Filled to the brim with students, the room was silent as they listened intently to Sarah Thorson from Genex as she explained the process of artificial insemination (AI). During the workshop, members asked questions and discussed breeding technologies available to Angus producers. All were eager to get their hands on the real reproductive tracts and test their knowledge and skills.

Across the hall juniors listened to Ginette Gottswiller about Angus marketing programs, and through the dividing wall stories were being told about the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand and information on American Angus Association programs was shared.

At the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development Conference (LEAD) in Seattle, Wash., cattle knowledge is just a portion of what junior members learn. The annual event, sponsored by the Angus Foundation, is an opportunity juniors have to leave the cattle at home but still enjoy the company

of people who share their same values and passions. During the four-day conference, juniors spend time focused on agriculture and Angus industries, hearing from industry experts and attending workshops on leadership while getting to explore a different part of the country.

► **Above:** This year, more than 110 NJAA members ranging in age from 14 to 21 years old traveled to Seattle, Wash., Aug. 6-9 to take part in the annual event sponsored by the Angus Foundation.

Firsthand experience

Greyson Fernandez, a first-generation Angus producer from Pine Mountain, Ga., wanted to learn more about the breed, so he decided to attend LEAD. At 18 years old he was one of the older members of the group, but he said he felt like a rookie since it was his first time at the conference. However, it was worth it, as he took technical and leadership knowledge home to his herd.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52



► LEAD is an opportunity for juniors to enjoy the company of people with similar values and interests but leave the cattle at home.

EVENT PARTIALLY FUNDED BY

Angus Foundation
EDUCATION • YOUTH • RESEARCH



► LEAD is full of team-building activities that allow juniors to work with others from around the country.



► Above: Put on by NJAB members, skits offer some funny, and slightly embarrassing moments.



► Juniors got the chance to address the whole group with ideas to meet the beef industry's challenges.



► Above: and left: There are plenty of opportunities for laughter and fellowship at LEAD.

► Right: The NJAB motivates and inspires juniors through a skit.



Sounds, Sights and Smells of Seattle CONTINUED FROM PAGE 50

“This was a great opportunity for me to travel to Seattle and meet over 100 like-minded people who share the same common goal of improving ourselves and our cattle,” said Fernandez. “I really enjoyed the Genex presentation as it taught me all the opportunities available, specifically to juniors to learn more about genetic technologies and gave us hands-on training in artificial insemination techniques.”

The theme of the conference, this year Success in Seattle, is brought to life by the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) members who organize the event. After a yearlong planning process, the board welcomes the NJAA to a city of their choosing. Retired NJAB leadership director Jessica Radcliffe, Weston, Wis., says the team

selected Seattle for the agricultural diversity the Pacific Northwest provides.

“We felt like a lot of our events are Midwest-centered or out east, especially when it comes to shows and participation,” Radcliffe says. “We wanted to move it out West to see a lot of the different ag industries these kids have never seen before.”

A day on the farm

Oyster shells crunched under the boots of the juniors as they walked out into Samish Bay at the home of Taylor Shellfish Farms and the site of the only lighthouse made completely from oyster shells. Nicole Gilmore, a farm employee, explained that shellfish farming is just like any other type of farming. The Taylor family uses tractors,

plants their shellfish in rows and works to protect their crop from predators.

The largest producer of farmed shellfish in the United States, the family operates a business of nearly 500 employees and 11,000 acres of tidelands along the Washington coast and British Columbia. They operate additional hatchery and nursery facilities in Hawaii and California, as well as a shellfish distribution business in Hong Kong. During low tide, Angus juniors walked out into the bay to see where shellfish were growing and were able to handle harvested live product.

“I’ve never seen anything like it being from the Midwest,” says Radcliffe. “It was a great way for the juniors to see an industry

CONTINUED ON PAGE 54



►Above: Sarah Thorson from Genex explains artificial insemination.

►Below: Juniors learn about AI equipment before testing it out themselves.



►Real bovine reproductive tracts allowed juniors to test their newfound knowledge of AI through hands-on activities.



► Nicole Gilmore, employee at Taylor Shellfish Farms, explains that shellfish farming is much like any other crop farming, with use of tractors, row planting and protection from predators. Juniors handled harvested live product.



► Above and right: Bellewood Acres and Distillery is one of the largest U-Pick operations in western Washington, with 25,000 fruit trees. They produce several value-added products, including apple cider, peanut butter, dried apple crisps and distilled apple spirits.

Sounds, Sights and Smells of Seattle CONTINUED FROM PAGE 52

of farming that they probably aren't used to, and that's what we want to relay to them — that we are all involved in agriculture no matter what product you are producing.”

A short drive north brought the group to Bellewood Acres and Distillery, a family-owned apple orchard and processing facility. John and Dorie Belisle, who planted the initial orchard in 1996 with the intention of producing wholesale apples, operate the farm. No longer wholesale with more than 25,000 fruit trees, the orchard is one of the largest U-Pick operations in western Washington.

In addition to the apples, they produce several value-added products, including apple cider, peanut butter, dried apple chips and distilled apple spirits. During their visit, juniors toured the orchard and distillery learning how the farm uses apples in various ways for their customers. The group enjoyed lunch at the processing facility and brought home several bottles of “Bubbly,” a sparkling apple cider produced by the farm.

The sites

While the variety of farms is interesting, many juniors travel from rural areas and it is the buzz of the city and its sites that excites them. Visiting Seattle, almost all said they were eager to visit the Space Needle. However, looking at the skyline of Seattle, it doesn't stand out right away. At one time the tallest building west of the Mississippi, the famous landmark's summit sits far below several towers today.

After a 35-floor-plus elevator ride, juniors found that from the top, the view is breathtaking and required multiple “selfies” (pictures taken of oneself, normally with a smartphone) from different directions. NJAA members feasted their eyes on Mount Rainer, the tallest mountain in the Cascade Range from one side of the needle, the Pacific Ocean from the other; and overlooked the city of Seattle from the sides.

A few steps from the needle, members learned about the history of Rock and Roll, saw several “Sci-Fi” famous movie props and

visited a gift shop devoted to the *Star Wars* saga at the Experience Music Project (EMP) museum.

Down near the Seattle waterfront sits Pike's Place Market, a tourist attraction visited more frequently than the Space Needle. One of the oldest continuously operated farmers' markets, Pike's Place is home to the original Starbucks and is famous for fresh fish. Students took time to explore the market, enjoying unique foods and walking down to view the ships on the bay.

A sweet aroma of sugary gum mixed with garbage and fish greeted the members who visited the Pike's Place Market Gum Wall, once dubbed by CNN as one of the “germiest” tourist attractions. In the alley below the famous market, the juniors left their mark by placing a piece of gum on the wall, adding to the artwork of many others before them.

Successful leaders

Back at the hotel, the youth were all about



►Above: Juniors toured the orchard and distillery learning how the farm uses apples in various ways.

►Right: NJAA members enjoyed touring downtown Seattle, exploring sights like the Space Needle, EMP Museum and Pike's Place Market.



►NJAA members contributed to the Pike's Place Market Gum Wall, dubbed by CNN as one of the “germiest” tourist attractions.



productivity. In addition to workshops from Angus industry leaders, they heard from Josh Shipp, an entertainer and motivational speaker, who taught them to triumph over hardships in life and received conversational training from Madlynn Ruble of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) on how to advocate for beef.

Fearless, members took the stage and microphones from the speakers, daring to address the entire group themselves, sharing ideas on how to meet the challenges the beef industry faces today. The group also listened to Kelly Barnes, a motivational speaker who taught them to make great moments more often. Participants learned about Pacific Northwest agriculture from fifth-generation Angus producer and past NJAA member, Kaydee Gilkey.

The NJAB provided workshops on professional and character development, including activities that helped juniors begin the process of learning how to create and refine a résumé. Throughout the

conference each retiring board member had the opportunity to address the group with thoughts and advice, reflecting on their growth and knowledge gained through the NJAA.

"The best leaders are those who don't really identify themselves as leaders but are people with a willingness to serve and see others succeed," said Will Fiske, Greenville, Va., retiring Foundation director. "That is what separates the good from the great."

Retiring NJAB Chairman Cory Watt wasn't able to give his retiring address after losing his battle with cancer in February. Stepping in, Alex Rogen, Brandon, S.D., newly elected NJAB board chairman, said a few words about Cory and the impact he had on the organization.

He shared, "It's incredible that you can come to something like this and meet someone who can become so special to you."

A Sunday morning prayer led by Corbin Cowles, Rockfield, Ky., began the end of another successful conference. He thanked

the Lord for the great breed of Angus cattle and the friendships that events like LEAD have helped them make.

Shane Kerner, Weiser, Idaho, retiring vice chairman of the NJAB, reflected on her experiences at LEAD. "This is the kind of stuff that helps mold you into the kind of person you want to be," she said.

Although a short event, the activities packed into LEAD provide various experiences that help youth leave as better people and smarter producers.

"Really, it is life-changing. You get to meet a lot of people and have experiences that you will never get from another association or organization," said Alana Eisenhour from Wellsville, Pa. "The greatest thing is being able to leave a better leader, advocate and well-rounded person by having these experiences."



► LEAD combines seminars and skill-building with plenty of fun activities that let juniors develop relationships with other Angus juniors nationwide.