

Angus Juniors Navigate



NJAA members travel to North Carolina to experience agriculture on the East Coast.

Story & photos by **JD Rosman**, American Angus Association

National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members traveled to Raleigh, N.C., for the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference to develop as leaders and experience agriculture in different parts of the United States. Juniors from 27 states, as well as two juniors from Canada, attended this year's conference, Aug. 3-6, to partake in the annual event sponsored by the Angus Foundation.

"There are very few conferences in America that could even compete with the LEAD conference's ability to network," says National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) leadership director Tim Mardesen.

The LEAD conference is hosted for youth ages 14-21, and this year's theme was "Navigating North Carolina." While in North Carolina, participants spent two days focused on agriculture, visiting Eastern North Carolina Crawfish Farm; the Tobacco Life Museum; a sweet potato and tobacco farm, Scott Farms; an Angus operation, Wood Angus; and Caterpillar Inc.

Eastern North Carolina Crawfish Farm is an industry-leading crawfish operation using deep-water ponds, which allows for

increased production. NJAA members were able to see firsthand how crawfish are raised on a commercial scale and even handle live crawfish.

"LEAD is about broadening knowledge and seeing how diverse agriculture can be," Mardesen says. "For many, crawfish farming isn't common in their area; it's important

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► **Above:** Juniors from 27 states, as well as two juniors from Canada, traveled to Raleigh, N.C., for the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference, Aug. 3-6, to partake in the annual event sponsored by the Angus Foundation.



► **Above & right:** Eastern North Carolina Crawfish Farm specializes in deep-water farming, a first for the industry.

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► **Above:** Caterpillar gave juniors an in-depth look into the production of Caterpillar machinery.

► **Below:** Every CAT machine is run through a demo course, which juniors were able to see firsthand.



► **Above:** Motivational speaker Bill Cordes urged juniors to step outside their comfort zones.

► **Below:** NJAA members were encouraged to be open to new ideas and to take those ideas home and implement them in their daily lives.



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to understand how all aspects of agriculture work together cohesively.”

A few miles down the road at the Tobacco Life Museum, juniors received a history lesson on tobacco production, historically one of the state’s most profitable crops, true still today. NJAA members later were able to walk through a tobacco field and see how tobacco is dried and handled at Scott Farms. In addition to tobacco, Scott Farms is also the world leader in sweet potato production and juniors were able to tour their processing plant, and learn how sweet potatoes are grown and produced.

Canadian junior Angus board member Wade Olynyk says the level of diversification is interesting to see.

“Not all their eggs are in one basket,” he says. “The markets are always going up and down and the diversification helps stabilize the operation.

“I will definitely take a lot of key ideas home with me,” Olynyk says.

Juniors later spent the day at Caterpillar, receiving a full tour of the production plant along with a live product demo.

The LEAD conference is coordinated by the NJAB, who led team-building activities, leadership workshops, and encouraged participants to step outside their comfort

zones and to meet new friends. Attendees also attended seminars on careers in agriculture presented by industry professionals in branding, marketing and ag management.

Juniors enjoyed a North Carolina agriculture producer panel, where juniors were able to discuss the vast diversity of agriculture found in North Carolina. The panel included Brian Warren, president of

the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association; Seth Church, owner of Wilkes Livestock Exchange; Johnny Rogers of Rogers Cattle Co.; and Joe Hampton of Back Creek Angus and former president of the American Angus Association.

For more information on the LEAD conference, visit www.angus.org.

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► **Above & below:** Juniors were able to see new and industry-leading technology at the crawfish and tobacco farms visited.



► Juniors saw all the CAT products manufactured in North Carolina, including the popular D series skid steers.

