



Next Generation

► Postcard from an NJAA director and state spotlights

Your time is now

Recently I was sitting in San Francisco, Calif., as a newly elected National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Director. While I waited for the latest round of Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) participants to arrive, I began visiting with a woman sitting beside me. She asked me why I was visiting San Francisco and the conversation quickly turned to the NJAA and the upcoming LEAD conference. Following a few minutes of small talk, the woman politely asked, “What is so special about Angus cattle, and why have I seen so many restaurants advertising Angus beef?”

After thinking a moment I said, “Angus cattle are known for their outstanding meat quality and tenderness, which explains why you see Angus beef advertised in many restaurants across the United States.”

After considering my answer, the woman politely said that she was a vegetarian and she makes a conscious choice not to eat beef. Now keep in mind that I am a Kansas farm boy who has been a carnivore since practically the day I was born, and I was immediately out of my comfort zone. I found that many of my supporting arguments about the potential upside of Angus beef were thrown out the window.

During my week in San Francisco, I realized this is a common roadblock faced by agriculturists throughout California and communities across the United States. With organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and People for

the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) gaining popularity, it has become increasingly difficult for producers to maintain their footing within the state.



Clinton Laflin

These organizations are operated by highly organized and intelligent people whose sole purpose is to destroy the industry that we all love. These organizations are bankrolled by Hollywood stars such as “Country” singer Carrie Underwood, go figure. The financial support and constant

exposure provided by these people is very powerful in the court of public opinion. These tactics have had a profound enough effect on my friend in the San Francisco airport to change her eating habits. The HSUS’s and PETA’s main targets are kids and teens because these organizations believe they are easier to persuade.

Don’t feel that since you are young your opinions as an agriculturist don’t matter. In fact, I see it quite differently. As a young person, your chance to have a large effect is now. You have the unique opportunity to spread the good word about agriculture and its producers. You have the unique perspective on an industry that most do not understand.

As you return to school this week, I challenge each of you to educate your fellow classmates about agriculture and how it plays a role in every day of your life.

As I close, ask yourself this question: What would my life be like without agriculture? During LEAD, Randy Perry of Fresno State

University closed his presentation with this challenge: “The future of agriculture rests in your hands. Are you ready?”

— Clinton Laflin, Kansas

PLA Awards Scholarships at KILE

The Pennsylvania Livestock Association (PLA) presented educational scholarships to six outstanding young individuals at the Keystone International Livestock Exposition (KILE) Oct. 1. PLA President Tammy Weaver made the presentations at the opening ceremony of the 53rd anniversary of the show.

Each of the recipients filled out a detailed application, including academic transcripts and personal references, as well as a narrative about their livestock involvement. They were chosen on the basis of outstanding leadership skills, a keen interest in the livestock industry and an involvement in KILE and support of PLA, among other traits. Receiving scholarships will be Sarah Doyle, **Caitlin Fairbairn**, **Ryan Fairbairn**, **Cody Gerlach**, Johanna Rohrer and Darla Romberger.

Youth Awards were also presented at the KILE. Selected from a field of candidates submitted by county Extension personnel and vocational agriculture teachers throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, awards are presented to outstanding 4-H and FFA youth. This year’s 4-H winners are **Kate Livingston** and Luke Graver. FFA winners are Kayla Romberger and Caleb Wright. They will receive a plaque and a monetary award.



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