

# Youth Opportunities in Today's Beef Industry

Programs available for today's youth.

Commentary by **Kelli Fulkerson**

**A**griculture has never been at a more critical turning point than it is today. People are two to three generations removed from the farm or ranch, and there is a growing concern from consumers about where their food and fiber comes from. The issue of youth not wanting to return home to pursue a career in production agriculture poses a large risk for future generations to come.

What can we, as young adults, do to help resolve these issues? Well, it's simple really. There are numerous programs to become involved with as a youth member. The *Angus Journal* and the American Angus Association keep members well-informed of opportunities for members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and its young adults, but there are other industry opportunities as well. We did a little research online to find a few examples.

## National Beef Ambassador Program

The National Beef Ambassador Program (NBAP) was created as an opportunity for youth to share their passion for the beef industry and increase consumer outreach while doing it. Outreach is conducted through promotional and educational events. These events could range from consumer expositions and health fairs to cooking demonstrations or classroom visits.

The NBAP is funded by the National Beef Checkoff Program, managed by the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board (CBB) and operated through the American National CattleWomen Inc. (ANCW).

A National Beef Ambassador must be a youth in the beef industry between 17 and 21 years of age. This person earns his or her way onto a team consisting of five members from across the country who are all superb leaders



► The 2012 National Beef Ambassador Team.

within the beef industry. National Beef Ambassador team members have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel for one year throughout the United States to educate consumers about beef production.

To become a team member on the national level, you must first show your home state that you have the talent, charisma and poise to represent its cattlemen. Each state chooses how it would like to host its individual contest and select national contestants.

Some states host a contest that replicates the national contest, which consists of a mock consumer promotion event, media interview, youth presentation, written issues responding to an anti-beef campaign and personal application. Other states base their selection from an application and recommendation process.

Each state has different general requirements for its selected contestants to complete before attending the national contest, which travels to a different location

each year.

The eligibility requirements to compete at the national contest are always the same. The contestant must complete at least one media interview. This could be with a local, state or national radio and/or television media. Contestants also complete at least three youth presentations with curriculum tailored to elementary education levels. Lastly, the contestant must complete two consumer promotions; these can be conducted as in-store demonstrations or at health fairs and expositions.

In addition to the senior contest and opportunity to become a traveling National Beef Ambassador, there is also an opportunity for the younger beef enthusiasts to participate through the Junior NBAP division.

The junior division provides opportunity for youth too young to compete at the senior level to be involved in outreach and promotion. This division was created in hopes of preparing youth to compete for the senior division when they become old enough. This is also a great way to get youth involved at a young age and for them to gain exposure to the industry.

Across the country, Beef Ambassadors share personal experiences; distribute product samples; and share key beef messages on nutrition,

recipes, preparation, animal welfare, environment and other key industry issues.

This program is essential to today's youth due to the consistent bombardment of anti-beef messaging that often finds its way into schools and children's education.

This year's contest will be Sept. 28-30, 2012, in Sacramento, Calif. All registrations must be completed by Sept. 1, 2012, to be eligible to compete.

If you would like more information about the NBAP and how to become involved, visit [www.nationalbeefambassador.org/](http://www.nationalbeefambassador.org/) or contact the program chairman from your state.



## National FFA Organization — Beef Proficiency Area

The National FFA Organization offers an invaluable experience to youth involved in agriculture. More specifically, the FFA offers Agricultural Proficiency Awards. This award honors FFA members who, through their Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE), have developed specialized skills that they can apply toward their future careers.

Students can compete for awards in 47 different areas covering everything from agricultural communications to wildlife management. These include a beef production proficiency area. Each award area has two categories, placement and entrepreneurship.

Placement proficiency awards are given to those whose SAEs are related to employment, apprenticeships or internships at an agribusiness or agriculture-related organization.

Entrepreneurship proficiency awards are given to those whose SAEs are related to ownership of an agribusiness or agriculture-related organization.

Proficiency awards are given out at the local, state and national levels. Each level offers a different prize to the winners who are selected. Check with your local FFA chapter to find out ways to become involved.

## College of agriculture and extension activities

In almost every state across the country, there is a land-grant university. These universities typically partner with state extension programs to carry the land-grant's mission beyond the university's campus. This can consist of furthering knowledge, education and research. Most of the time, the extension partnership includes 4-H programs within the designated state.

For example, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln hosted the Nebraska Youth Beef Leadership Symposium. The program's stated goal was to offer youth a chance to meet other youth from around the United States, work with industry professionals, develop leadership, create marketing strategies for their individual farms and ranches, and network with Nebraska producers, allied industry professionals and staff.

Another example is the North Carolina Cattlemen's Youth Beef Industry Tour. This event is open to youth between the ages



of 14-21, and no prior beef knowledge is required to attend. This event focuses on youth having the opportunity to travel across North Carolina and see the farms and ranches that raise cattle and learn all facets of the beef industry.

For more information about events that are happening in your state, visit your land-grant university's website and sign up for a newsletter if there is one available to you.

## Youth Beef Industry Congress

Hosted bi-annually, the Youth Beef Industry Congress (YBIC) brings together leaders of other youth organizations, such as the national youth breed association officers, including the NJAA.

This conference enriches their knowledge and understanding of today's beef business and offers an industry-issues training conference.

This year's YBIC was in conjunction with NCBA's annual winter conference in Nashville, Tenn. The date and location of the 2014 conference has not yet been announced.

## State cattlemen's and women's junior organizations

Each state has some form of a cattlemen's or women's organization. Sometimes you will find that these organizations harbor special opportunities for youth members to become involved. For example, some states elect a junior board of directors to act as the governing body for all things related to the organization's junior members.

National organizations available for junior membership are the NCBA; Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA); National Cattlemen's Foundation (NCF); ANCW and the U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA).

To see if there is something available at your state level, contact your local cattlemen's or women's organization.

## Master's of Beef Advocacy

Youth can earn their MBA earlier than their parents ever expected — and for free! Well, at least their Master's of Beef Advocacy (MBA), that is.

The MBA program is a self-directed online training designed to equip beef producers and interested candidates with the information they need to be everyday advocates for the beef industry.

MBA students are required to complete six courses in beef advocacy, including:

- ▶ Modern Beef Production — Sharing the many benefits of modern, efficient U.S. beef production;
- ▶ Animal Care — Explaining our commitment to raising healthy animals;
- ▶ Beef Safety — Communicating why producing safe food for consumers is a top priority;
- ▶ Beef Nutrition — Explaining how great-tasting beef strengthens and sustains our bodies;
- ▶ Environmental Stewardship — Sharing how we're protecting the environment for future generations; and
- ▶ The Beef Checkoff — Communicating the value of your investment in growing demand for beef.

Once a student has completed all the course work, they will have the option to attend a "commencement" ceremony that finalizes the information that they learned and how to utilize it on social media portals such as Facebook and Twitter.

The MBA program is funded by the beef checkoff and managed by NCBA. All you have to do to become a graduate is visit [www.beef.org/](http://www.beef.org/)

[MBAApplication.aspx](http://MBAApplication.aspx) and begin your training.

**Just get involved! It doesn't matter where or when, but there is a future out there for you within this industry.**

## National Cattlemen's Beef Association — Young Producers Council

In 2008, NCBA saw a need for a program that focused on the younger generation to become involved. This sparked creation for what is now known as NCBA's Young Producers' Council (YPC).

YPC's stated mission is "The Young Producers' Council will be an active player in National Cattlemen's Beef Association policy development and will work to cultivate more peer members, as well as serve as industry advocates."

In order to join, you must be a current NCBA member between the ages of 18 and 35. If you are a student, there is a student NCBA membership option available.

## A world of opportunity

With so many different opportunities in the beef industry, it can seem daunting as to where to begin. Again, the answer is simple ... just get involved! It doesn't matter where or when, but there is a future out there for you within this industry.



**Editor's Note:** Kelli Fulkerson is the editorial intern for Angus Productions Inc.