

Angus Juniors Raise the Bar in Ames

by **Crystal Albers**, assistant director of communications/web editor, American Angus Association

Angus youth from across the Midwest met March 5-7 in Ames, Iowa, for the National Junior Angus Association's (NJAA's) premier leadership training conference, Raising the Bar. Twenty-one officers and advisors from five state junior Angus associations participated in the course, geared toward building stronger leaders while forming important regional relationships.

The event began with opening speaker John Thomson, Iowa State University (ISU) Dean of Veterinary Medicine, who encouraged juniors to raise expectations and measure results. Thomson challenged youth to find opportunities in challenging times. Challenges create opportunities, he said, but it's up to juniors to uncover those opportunities.

Angus juniors spent the remainder of the event focused on meeting that challenge. The NJAA Board of Directors conducted several team-building activities as well as workshops on résumés and interviews; scholarships; animal welfare vs. animal rights; conflict resolution; and American Angus Association® and NJAA trivia.

Raising the Bar participants toured the ISU campus — including the meat lab and

animal science building — and visited with Iowa 4-H Youth Director Mike Anderson, who gave attendees an overview of retinal image screening and its applications in animal identification (ID).

Angus juniors then enjoyed a night of bowling and arcade games Saturday, followed by a devotional service Sunday morning.

Robin Ruff, director of junior activities, said the Midwest conference offered Angus teens a valuable opportunity to meet with peers, share ideas and form stronger teams within their state and region.

"These events are crucial in developing some of our junior members into key Angus leaders," Ruff said. "They gain confidence in their leadership abilities and truly raise the bar on what they can accomplish."

Now in its third year, the Raising the Bar conference continues to foster the development of Angus youth by hosting events in four regions across the country. The NJAA, with sponsorship from the Angus Foundation, has conducted Raising the Bar conferences in cities such as Wooster, Ohio; Saint Joseph, Mo.; Boise, Idaho; and Baton Rouge, La.



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► Participating March 5-7 in the Midwest Raising the Bar Conference were (front row, from left) Clinton Laflin, NJAA Board member, Olsburg, Kan.; Trenton Blythe and Meghan Blythe, both of White City, Kan.; Hannah McCabe, Elk City, Kan.; Allison Blythe, White City, Kan.; Cody Smith, NJAA Board member, West Plains, Mo.; (middle row, from left) Tyler Ottensmeier, McLouth, Kan.; Shannon Yokley, Jefferson City, Mo.; Mary Kate Mardesen, Oxford, Iowa; Paige Wallace, Stotts City, Mo.; Tim Mardesen, Oxford, Iowa; MacKenzie Flory, Baldwin City, Kan.; (back row, from left) Andrew Rogen, NJAA Board member, Brandon, S.D.; Reed McCormick, Pleasantville, Iowa; Savannah Schafer, Nehawka, Neb.; Hannah Bartholomew, Archie, Mo.; Bryanne Duckett, New Liberty, Iowa; and Alex Rogen, Brandon, S.D. Not pictured is Kale Kiesewetter, Letts, Iowa.