

# Raise Your Hand

Volunteering benefits your farm, industry and future.

by **Barb Baylor Anderson**, field editor

**B**eef production may be a 24/7 job, but producers find setting time aside for professional development and industry improvement benefits their farms, industry and the future. No matter what segment of the beef industry is represented, producers find value in volunteering.

## **Sara Prescott**

**Lincoln, Illinois**

**Angus breeder and beef industry advocate**

Sara Prescott has turned her passion for the beef industry into several volunteer opportunities that help her promote the breed, improve their family herd and build a future for their children.

Michael Prescott's family has raised Angus cattle since 1950. Michael is Sara's husband. His grandfather, Allen Prescott, established the herd. The operation was passed down to Michael's father, Richard Prescott, who continues to manage the original farm near Mendota, Ill. Richard focuses on purebred Angus seedstock and marketing freezer beef to local consumers.

Michael and Sara started an extension of the Prescott herd near Lincoln, Ill., in 2006, with 20 replacement heifers. This past year

they moved another 35 replacements from the home farm to Lincoln to allow them to provide more Angus feeder cattle to local customers. Today the two operations cumulatively manage more than 200 Angus mama cows.

"Raising Angus cattle is an important part of our history and our future. We hope to continue this legacy so we will be able to pass it down to the fourth generation," says Sara. "Our herd has not only grown in size, but has also become more efficient with help from those in the industry. We try and take every opportunity to attend cattle-related events and talk with those involved in leadership to learn more about what the beef industry has to offer. The one-on-one relationships we have made have definitely contributed to the success of our business."

Prescott currently serves on the Illinois Beef Association (IBA) Board of Governors and is president-elect for the Illinois CattleWomen. She is treasurer of the Heartland Beef Alliance, and is on the National Cattleman's Beef Association (NCBA) Task Force for the Young Beef Leaders Program. She is a current participant in the IBA Young Beef Leaders Training



Program and Illinois Farm Families, which focuses on educating Illinois consumers about agriculture.

"With today's dynamic trends focused on food and how it is grown or raised, it is essential to the viability of our industry that we open our doors and share our stories," she says. "Being involved in organizations that serve our livelihood gives me the opportunity to help provide a positive impact, not only every day on our farm, but also with those who enjoy what we produce."

Prescott says her participation in various associations fosters networking and provides continuing-education and leadership-development opportunities. By becoming involved first on the local level, she has been able to expand her horizons within the beef industry and work her way up to more active participation at the state and national levels.

"I have obtained important certifications and improved our herd by learning from others, as well as from sharing my experiences," she says. "More issues and policies are coming to the table with agriculture every day, and it is crucial we stand together to defend the industry."

Prescott stresses more producer involvement with beef groups would aid agriculture as a whole.

"We all lead busy lives, but taking on roles outside of our own farm's comfort zones is critical to [the] success of our industry," she says. "The involvement and influence producers put into these groups shapes our future. It is also important for these associations to have strong membership bases to advocate on behalf of policy positions. The relationships and knowledge producers gain through these organizations provides priceless tools we can't afford not to have to succeed."

## **Trever Hall**

**Springerville, Arizona**

**Commercial cow-calf rancher**

Trever Hall was recently recognized as part of Vance Publishing's "40 under 40 for



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Agriculture” program. While employed in agricultural finance, the fifth-generation commercial cow-calf breeder remains part of the family operation near Springerville, Ariz., in the White Mountains.

“For decades this part of Arizona was known for its good Hereford cattle, but over the last 20 years or so, we’ve seen a transition to more Angus cattle. A few years ago when we were restocking our ranch, we made the decision to go with Angus for our base genetics,” says Hall. “We recognized the premium the breed demands at sale time, so it made good business sense. This was good for us because we were able to find high-quality, locally raised heifers and bulls which were accustomed to our higher altitudes, rocky terrain and variable climate.”

In addition to ranching, Hall is vice president and portfolio manager of Farm Credit Services Southwest. Even so, he finds time to be an active member of NCBA, serve on the Arizona Cattlegrowers’ Association Board of Directors and support such groups as the Public Lands Council and Farm Bureau. He says volunteer involvement is important for many reasons.

“I enjoy the networking and educational opportunities these organizations provide. I can use the things I learn from being involved with them to improve my operation. I also feel that these organizations do a lot to promote and protect the cattle industry. They are truly grassroots, and producers as members are instrumental in setting policy and direction,” he says.

Otherwise, Hall believes the beef industry’s freedom to operate is in jeopardy.

“Democracy isn’t a spectator sport. Our greatest strength is in our numbers. It is important that we speak with one united voice,” he says. “We do not want to be viewed as politically insignificant. That’s a big deal now, when you think about how far removed from agriculture our population has become and how many take for granted our safe, abundant and inexpensive food supply.”

Hall stresses that producers should learn to relate to consumers on a personal level.

“We need to be authentic, show them what we do on our operations and tell them who we are,” he says. “There are a lot of misconceptions about agriculture. In the age of social media, we can do a lot more, individually and through organizations, to promote our industry and our way of life.”

**Vaughn Meyer**  
**Sorum, South Dakota**  
**Angus breeder and Association director**

Sodak Angus Ranch was homesteaded by Vaughn Meyer’s grandfather, Otto Meyer, in 1909 near the former town of Sorum, S.D. Today, the Sodak cow herd is composed of 400 purebred black Angus cows and 200 purebred Red Angus cows. The operation includes daily involvement by Vaughn’s wife, Lois, and son Jeffery, and weekly assistance from two daughters, Jessica and Jeny, and their families. The Meyers target commercial operators for their bull sales.

Personally, Vaughn also targets involvement in Angus and other organizations to represent fellow cattlemen at county, state and national functions, and to be a voice for agriculture in government and to those unfamiliar with beef production.

“I am involved in many organizations to ensure a future for our youth, and to stress our contributions in feeding a nation. Agriculture as a renewable resource provides the economic foundation that contributes to the true wealth and security of our nation,” he says.

Meyer is active in both state and local Angus associations and currently sits on the American Angus Association Board of Directors. He participates in county cattle associations and is a director on the Perkins County Planning Board. Meyer also is a director on the Cattlemen’s Beef Board and The Organization for Competitive Markets. As time permits, he likes to be involved with the South Dakota Farmers Union and Dakota Rural Action. He is vice president of Region 1 of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association and is their marketing committee chairman.

“Being involved with so many organizations and so many individuals means I am continuously subjected to new ideas and innovations that benefit my ranch and breeding programs,” he says. “Through my privilege to be a part of these organizations, I am introduced to the latest genetics, research and innovations that can complement our operation.”

Meyer adds, though, that serving industry organizations is primarily about representing fellow beef producers rather than fulfilling personal goals.



**“We are constituents of a shrinking industry where many voices and involvement are needed.”**

— *Vaughn Meyer*

“We are constituents of a shrinking industry where many voices and involvement are needed. I believe my involvement in the Angus breed represents a voice for progressive breeders who are incorporating genetic excellence into their programs and seeking new innovative programs and services from their association,” he says.

He encourages young breeders especially to get involved early in their careers in the Angus Association. “Leadership is a two-way street for the interaction of ideas that benefit both our herds and our association,” he says. “Past aggressive leadership has spawned many industry-leading programs and services. Tomorrow’s innovations are dependent on willing participants.”



**Editor’s Note:** A former National Junior Angus Board member, Barb Baylor Anderson is a freelancer from Edwardsville, Ill.