

Vieselmeyer represents Colorado at LEAD conference

Written by Holyoke Enterprise



The 2012 Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference is one for the record books. White water rafting, a challenging high ropes course and top livestock industry speakers made the Rocky Mountain landscape an ideal setting to bring Angus juniors together.

Austin Vieselmeyer of Amherst was the lone representative from Colorado at the conference.

The event, themed “Peak Performance,” was held Aug. 2-5 in Fort Collins. Thanks to generous support from the Angus Foundation, 193 National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members and enthusiasts from 32 states and Canada were able to experience the leadership conference. LEAD is an opportunity specifically for members 14-21 years old.

“LEAD is one of the best events the NJAA offers youth,” says Kelli Retallick of Glen Haven, Wis. “The conference gets kids out of the showring and into a room full of youth from across the country who are all passionate about the same thing—the Angus breed.”

Retallick is a member of the NJAA Board of Directors, elected during the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) each summer. The junior board kicked off the LEAD conference with team building activities and presented various workshops throughout the four-day event.

Learning from each other and industry professionals

Another featured speaker was former junior board member Britney Creamer of Montrose who shared her recent journey to Uruguay and what the cattle business is like in South America. The

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first night of the conference, participants enjoyed hypnotist Dr. Al Snyder, whose talents entertained the crowd with plenty of laughter.

A stop at the Colorado State University (CSU) Ropes Challenge Course gave juniors the chance to experience the importance of building trust and communication skills with their team members. Climbing a rock wall and ropes nearly 30 feet from the ground had many juniors facing their fear of heights, and encouraging each other every step of the way.

“These type of activities allow juniors to realize that you need a team and leadership skills to get almost anywhere in life,” says Robin Ruff, American Angus Association director of junior activities. “And it’s a whole lot more fun while letting them just be kids.”

That team spirit continued while hitting the Cache La Poudre River for white water rafting, a first for many on the trip.

“When I heard the trip included white water rafting, I knew this LEAD conference was one I couldn’t miss,” says LEAD participant Justin Mauss of Ash Grove, Mo. “But the real adventure for me was touring and learning from some of the most respected ranchers and agriculture professionals in the Angus breed.”

The LEAD conference educates juniors about the breed that ties them all together, Angus. Participants heard from Ryan Peterson, Leachman Cattle of Colorado in Wellington, on how Angus genetics can transform a cow herd. Heather Hays of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) spoke about the popular branded beef program, joined by Jeff Harvey of Lombardi Brothers Meats, Denver, who shared how CAB helped the specialty meats company survive during tough economic times.

A favorite for many, Dr. Temple Grandin also spent time with the junior members while at the CSU campus, and discussed techniques that can make them better stewards to their animals. The CSU Agricultural Research, Development and Education Center staff was also on-hand to visit with LEAD participants, as well as serve lunch prepared by the CSU meat lab.

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The LEAD conference included tours at Aristocrat Angus Farms, Platteville; Rocky Mountain Sire Services, Bennett; and Spruce Mountain Ranch, Larkspur.

While at Aristocrat, juniors toured facilities and listened to Dr. Tim Holt of CSU explain high altitude pulmonary hypertension in cattle. Juniors then traveled to Rocky Mountain Sire Services, Inc., where they were able to view popular sires on display and learn about the operation, from semen collection to storage.

Tours ended with dinner and entertainment at Spruce Mountain Ranch. Holt put on a magic show for the juniors, who were also able to view cattle across the vast ranch spanning the mountain valley.

“The Angus Foundation is proud to financially support the LEAD conference for Angus juniors each year,” says Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president. “These youth are able to network with one another, while learning more about the Angus breed through visiting elite ranches. This growing and learning will undeniably help them become advocates for the Angus breed in the future.”

The 2012 LEAD Conference ended with two speakers who encouraged participants to put their leadership skills to use. A speaker from Rachel’s Challenge shared the story of the Rachel Scott, a victim of the 1999 Columbine High School shootings, and how students can make a positive impact by: looking for the best in others, dreaming big, choosing positive influences, speaking with kindness and starting their own chain reaction.

Motivational speaker Andrew McCrea encouraged juniors to take what they’ve learned from the event and put it to practice in their own schools, communities and junior associations.

The American Angus Association is the nation’s largest beef organization, serving more than 30,000 members across the United States and Canada. It provides programs and services to farmers, ranchers and others who rely on the power of Angus to produce quality genetics for the beef industry and quality beef for consumers.

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For more information about Angus cattle and the American Angus Association's programs and services, visit www.angus.org .

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