



Auxiliary Notes

► by Shirley Williams, president, American Angus Auxiliary

If I'd have known then what I know now ...

When I was recruited to take on an officer position in the American Angus Auxiliary three years ago, I was eager to become active in the Angus industry on the national level. The idea of serving the breed and supporting youth through the Auxiliary really appealed to me. I thought I knew exactly what I was getting into, but leading a national volunteer organization has been one of the most challenging tasks I have ever attempted!

The Auxiliary way

I'm active in my church on the worship committee, and I have served as chairman of Partners in Education for the local school system. Before I began working on the farm every day, I was even more involved in the community as a public relations professional in the health field.

Now, I've become a 4-H leader and serve on the Arkansas Angus Association board and on the board of trustees of the Arkansas Oklahoma State Fair. When friends in Auxiliary leadership roles encouraged me to accept the role of secretary-treasurer and work my way up to president, they assured me I had all the experience I needed to be successful. I'll admit, I wasn't sure they knew what they were talking about!

Some remarked that I wasn't an Auxiliary "insider" when I started. That was certainly true, but I always thought that was a positive. The patterns and traditions many members may take for granted as "the Auxiliary way" simply weren't on my radar screen. But, even

if I had been a member for 20 years, how could I have possibly known everything about the Auxiliary and what was required to lead it? How could I have fathomed where the last three years would take this organization, and me with it?

But wait. Did I mention that I am a member of Rotary International?

Each week I join my fellow local Rotarians for a lunch meeting as part of a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders. Approximately 1.2 million of us belong to more than 31,000 Rotary clubs located in 166 countries. Rotary provides humanitarian service, encourages high ethical standards in all vocations, and helps build goodwill and peace in the world. The main objective of Rotary is service — in the community, in the workplace and throughout the world. The Rotary motto is "Service above self."

Those friends who said I knew all I needed to know to lead the Auxiliary were right after all. Each time I met a bump, a curve, a steep hill or an unexpected chughole in the road, I reached into my experience tote bag. What was always waiting at the top was Rotary's idea of service above self. I applied it to each question, issue and challenge as it appeared.

It is truly fascinating that when service is the goal — the quest, the lofty purpose and the one, true task at the end of the day — *how* you get to the answer, solution or new idea doesn't seem to matter much. *That* you've served another and the greater good is what it's all about.

Serving Angus values

Make no mistake — service is the one role of the American Angus Auxiliary. It always was and always will be. We've said that it's more than what we do, it is who we are — as individuals and as an organization.

The Auxiliary is the SUV, the "service utility vehicle," that transports our values. Our values as breeders and caretakers of the

land, water and air make the cattle we raise worth more. Our values as business people make others seek us out to buy our products. Our values as parents, teachers and friends make our relationships work and our lives fulfilling.

Our values as a service organization remind us to "stand out of each other's light" and let the ideas and hard work of fellow members have a chance to shine. Our values keep service above the struggles that our humanness can sometimes project on a situation. Service above self works for Rotary the world over, and it sure works for me.

In three years, we have covered a lot of ground. However, there is still much to be done to keep our Auxiliary moving forward. Updating bylaws, adapting processes, adding and subtracting programs, and expanding the leadership and the gender of our membership are not changes — they are simply the housekeeping that will enable us to serve our breed and our people more efficiently and effectively so the work we do has greater and longer-lasting impact.

My year as president now comes to a close, and I move toward the role of advisor to the new officer team. I promise not to advise too narrowly, too loudly or too emphatically. Some lessons you just have to learn for yourself, and sometimes a situation calls for "new math" that old teachers may not know.

As I look forward to more free time than I've had in the past three years, it occurs to me now that my service to the breed may have actually served *me* more. The organization and communication skills I've honed, the people and ideas I've encountered, and the tolerance and vision I've gained have kept me learning and growing in this leadership experience.

My approach to incorporating volunteer hours into my daily work has been transformed. The flowers of friendship and kudos of successful cooperative efforts are gifts that will stay with me always.

Who knew that service to the Angus breed could be so "self-serving?" Not me! If I knew then what I know now ... I wouldn't have done it any other way!

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