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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHOTO: Available upon request via prphotos@angus.org.

Making Connections

The American Angus Auxiliary hosts the second “Women Connected” conference

Oftentimes, life’s best motivation is a friend. Someone to connect with who shares a common purpose or goal, and can share ideas, inspiration and enthusiasm. In the Angus breed, there’s one group that amplifies that mission each day.

The American Angus Auxiliary is dedicated to supporting women involved in raising Angus cattle, developing friendships among them, and sponsoring activities and fundraisers to support Angus youth as the next generation of breed leaders.

On April 12-14 in Saint Joseph, Mo., the Auxiliary hosted its second “Women Connected” conference as a way to introduce women to one another, provide leadership training and, most of all, allow them to share what life is like on their farm or ranch.

Twenty-seven Angus cattlemen, Auxiliary members and others involved in the cattle business took part in the three-day event, which was generously supported by the Angus Foundation.

“It sounds kind of simple, but our overall goal was just connecting,” says Auxiliary President Cortney Holshouser, Castalia, N.C. “One speaker stressed to us that we’ve got to connect to something. The one takeaway I hope women gained from this conference is finding that one thing that they want to connect to. For me, it’s finding women who aren’t aware of the Auxiliary and involving them in our organization.”

Throughout the event, participants were encouraged to connect with three main priorities – each other, beef consumers and the Angus business. They took part in a number of social activities, workshop speakers and tours while attending “Women Connected.”

The opportunity to get-to-know and share ideas with like-minded women was an event highlight, says conference attendee Deanna Hofing of Coatesville, Ind.

“I felt that ‘Women Connected’ was an opportunity for me to create relationships with other ladies who are doing similar things that I am, not only raising a family but also working on and off the farm,” Hofing says. “It allowed me to get another perspective of how women my age and older, and connect with them.”

By engaging with one another through meals, entertainment and team-building exercises, participants now have budding friendships from across the country – states as far as Montana and Idaho, to North Carolina and Maryland.

“We wanted to bring together a diverse group of women, from different areas of the country, diverse Angus backgrounds, who share the common bond of Angus cattle,” says Anne Lampe, Women Connected chair from Scott City, Kan.

Engaging beef consumers

Women in the cattle industry have a unique perspective to share with beef consumers interested in learning about food production.

Debbie Lyons-Blythe, a cattle rancher and blogger from Western Kansas, spoke to the group on how to approach conversations with consumers, and why it's important to spend time making those connections. She advised the women to listen more than they speak, ask questions more than they tell, and – most importantly – stay positive and not defensive.

“Women play a huge role in our industry in this day and time,” Holshouser says. “If a woman in the grocery store, an average consumer, understands that someone like her has a vital role in the production of that product, it may help her make that connection and feel more confident in feeding beef to her family.”

Participants boosted their confidence by learning from two leadership and communications professionals. Suzy Graven, a life and business strategy coach who grew up on a ranch in the Nebraska Sandhills, motivated attendees to embrace their personal talents and strengths to make a difference in the world around them.

Also on the agenda was Andrew McCrea, a farm broadcaster from Maysville, Mo., who shared communications tips, ways to interact with the media, and inspiration to live a life centered on others.

“While we live agriculture and we live rurally, our life is also urban,” says Missy Cozzitorto, Lawrence, Kan. “This conference offered me an opportunity to step out and take a leap of faith, learn something new, glean insights and pull together answers to questions. I don't have that industry background, but I do understand the importance of what this industry represents.”

Interacting with Angus

The “Women Connected” conference also involved a tour of the American Angus Association® headquarters. Employees gave tours, answered questions and spent time visiting with the group. They learned about the wide variety of programs and services available at the Association, including DNA testing, AAA Login, management tools and more. In addition, the group was able to learn about social media, photography and marketing through a series of Association presentations.

“A lot of times people interact with Association staff on a day-to-day basis, but never get to put a face with a name,” Holshouser says. “It's amazing to see all the things that go on behind the scenes that you have no idea what really what goes on until you're here and see how hard they work for the membership.”

The Women Connected conference is an event hosted by the American Angus Auxiliary every other year, thanks to support from the Angus Foundation. The next conference is being planned for 2016.

After completing an application to attend, the selected participants were awarded free registration, lodging and meals. The only financial responsibility was transportation to and from Saint Joseph, Mo.

A complete list of the 2014 participants follows.

About the American Angus Auxiliary

The American Angus Auxiliary consists of individuals interested in the welfare of the Angus breed. Its members work to provide educational activities for junior Angus members, such as scholarship programs, awards and competitions. For more information about the Auxiliary, visit www.angusauxiliary.com.

ANGUS MEANS BUSINESS. Explore how the Angus breed impacts every sector of the cattle business – from the feedlot to the meatcase – during the 2014 Angus Means Business National Convention and Trade Show. Hosted by the American Angus Association, the event takes place Nov. 4-6 at the KCI Expo Center in Kansas City, Mo.

Participants will hear from top-flight speakers, conduct Association business, visit the trade show featuring allied industry partners and have the opportunity to attend the first-ever Angus University.

The American Angus Association is the nation's largest beef breed organization, serving more than 25,000 members across the United States, Canada and several other countries.

For more information about Angus cattle and the 2014 convention, visit www.ANGUS.org.

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2014 Women Connected Participants

Cindy Ahearn, Wills Point, Texas
Heather Bear, Aurora, Ind.
Melissa Brown, Vermilion, Ill.
Emma Collins, Tupelo, Miss.
Missy Cozzitorto, Lawrence, Kan.
Kathy Dubs, Billings, Mont.
Marlene Dukehart, Sykesville, Md.
Stacy Erdmann, Lisbon, N.D.
Rachel Frost, Tallula, Ill.
Mary Greiman, Garner, Iowa
Cortney Hill-Dukehart Cates, Modoc, Ind.
Lynne Hinrichsen, Westmoreland, Kan.
Deanna Hofing, Coatesville, Ind.
Cortney Holshouser, Castalia, N.C.
Martha Holshouser, Gold Hill, N.C.
Carla Jurgenson, Atlanta, Ill.
Melanie Kiani, Morton, Miss.
Mary Kohl, Waterloo, Wis.
Anne Lampe, Scott City, Kan.
Carla Malson, Parma, Idaho
Leslie Mindemann, Sullivan, Wisc.
Vicki Murdock, New Iberia, La.
Julie Murnin, Huntley, Mont.
Lori Pillars, Martin, Mich.
Shally Rogen, Brandon, S.D.
Anne Patton Schubert, Taylorsville, Ky.
Tonya Theis, Leavenworth, Kan.

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