

Establishing Connections, Building Relationships

Conference designed to bring diverse group together.

by **Anne Lampe**, American Angus Auxiliary

Establishing connections and building relationships was the theme for the Women Connected conference hosted by the American Angus Auxiliary as part of its yearlong celebration of the Auxiliary's 60th anniversary. The conference in Saint Joseph, Mo., April 14-16, was designed to bring together a diverse group of women from different regions of the country and backgrounds who are connected by and share a common bond — Angus cattle.

Twenty women were selected from applicants to join the Auxiliary executive committee to engage one another in conversation and friendship, and to empower leadership and educate themselves in a variety of relevant topics. In addition, the women were able to connect through networking and a fun-filled evening at a dinner theatre, where participants were actors and all interacted in solving a mystery.

Women Connected was underwritten through the generous support of the Angus Foundation.

"Availing major sponsorship support to the American Angus Auxiliary for their Women Connected conference was a wonderful opportunity for the Angus Foundation to invest in the education of our members and Angus family," Milford Jenkins, Foundation president, said.

"Education is at the core of our mission, and it was our pleasure to partner with the American Angus Auxiliary and help them achieve their goal of creating this activity for the benefit of women involved in the Angus breed and beef cattle industry."

Suzy Graven, Cave Creek, Ariz.,

creator of the in-production television documentary series *Woman Behind the Brand*, engaged participants during her opening keynote address, sharing stories of women who blazed trails in the American West and laid the foundation for today's

farm and ranch women, as well as women in all sectors of the business world.

She wove tales of pioneer women setting out for the west with wagons full of family heirlooms and household goods ready to make a home in the new territory, only to encounter unforeseen hardships, challenges and opportunities. She connected their stories to today's woman by asking, "What's in your wagon?"

Cortney Hill-Dukehart Cates, Modoc, Ind., shared, "Suzy provided a wonderful start to a great Auxiliary weekend! I found her to be very motivating and inspiring to challenge myself personally and professionally."

Day 2 of the conference began with a video presentation celebrating the mission and programs of the Auxiliary. Presentations by Association staff members Jena Thompson and Derrick Collins linked social media, photography and marketing to promoting and advertising ranches and herds, as well as advocating for agriculture. Jenkins and Katie Allen related the Angus Foundation story, sharing the mission, goals and successes of the Foundation.

Debbie Lyons-Blythe, an Angus rancher and industry advocate from White City, Kan., entertained and explained how she uses her blog, *Life on a Kansas Cattle Ranch*, and social media to tell the world her personal story through stories, recipes and photography of how ranching and agriculture provides healthy, safe food.

Blythe shared her inspiration to start her blog and advocate change. She explained that a cousin who was just one generation removed from the farm balked when offered milk and hamburgers for a meal while visiting Blythe's ranch, sharing concerns of unsafe hormones.

Blythe encouraged women to find their "inspiration" and niche to help connect the true story of agriculture with consumers. Sheyna Strommen, Fort Rice, N.D., said of Blythe's message, "I appreciated her straightforward, 'you can make a difference from your own ranch' message."

Chris McGarraugh, Perryton, Texas, added, "Her talk about advocating was entertaining and very helpful. It has definitely

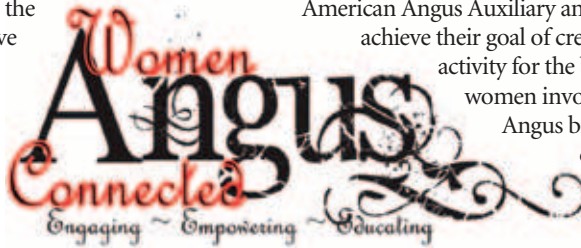


PHOTO BY DERRICK COLLINS, AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION

►The Angus Auxiliary executive committee and Women Connected participants were (seated, from left) Susan Pelton, Sam McDonnell, Chris McGarraugh, Carla Malson, Danyal Coon, Rachel Frost, Sheyna Strommen, Barbara Ettredge; (second row, from left) Mary K Vejraska, Lynne Hinrichsen, Heather Bear, Sandy Carmichael, Suzy Hebbert, Martha Holshouser, Marlene Dukehart, Cortney Holshouser, Anne Patton Schubert; (third row, from left) Anne Lampe, Emily Tennant, Marsha Corbin, Judy Brown, Carla Jurgenson, Christy Perdue, Beverly Figge, Cortney Hill-Dukehart Cates; (fourth row, from left) Leslie Mindemann, Lezlie Halladay, Suzy Graven, Myrna Sharpe, and Iva Maier.

made me consider ways I can help advocate for Angus, *Certified Angus Beef*® and agriculture.”

Marcy Heim, Madison Wis., founder of The Artful Asker and personal management and fundraising coach, “enter-trained” in a three-hour, two-part interactive workshop. Session I, Strengthening Your C.O.R.E., explored abundance in life and leadership. Heim challenged participants to find deeper success and satisfaction as we go through life. Sharing that mindset, more than our methods, is our greatest asset as we lead, serve and live.

She encouraged listeners to find their “wobble,” a balance of personal, professional, family, and work lives, and caring for others. In the session’s message, C.O.R.E stood for clarity, optimism, responsibility, relationships, excellence and education. Heim’s fast-paced, engaging Session I workshop motivated and taught through personal experience, thought-invoking quotes and humor.

Rachel Frost, Tallulah, Ill., reflected, “Her C.O.R.E. presentation was uplifting, something we all need in our busy lives.”

Sam McDonnell, Columbus, Mont., said she was inspired by the presentation: “My favorite session was Strengthening Your C.O.R.E. I feel it made me think pretty deeply about how important our attitude is for so many things in life and business. Marcy made me smile; it is fun to see someone so positive with herself. The one saying she had on the printout, ‘Surround yourself with successful people,’ made me think how lucky I was to be involved with such a group of women that made me feel this way. I also liked another saying ‘Try not. Do or do not. There is no try.’ My husband, Leo, has used this with our kids and grandchildren.”

In Session II, Empowering Your Leadership to Serve as Development Ambassadors, Heim led exercises designed to empower the development of leadership investments in organizations, fundraising and major gift-giving processes. Through her work experience, she gave board members and volunteers the tools to create positive and productive relationships that encourage



► Attendees of the Women Connected conference learn about the history of the American Angus Association during one of the tours that concluded the event.



► Marcy Heim, Madison, Wis., encouraged attendees to find their “wobble,” a balance of personal, professional, family, and work lives, and caring for others.



► From left: Martha and Cortney Holshouser and Christy Perdue enjoy an evening at a dinner theatre where conference participants were actors and all took part in solving a mystery.

others to invest in organizations and become long-term, lifelong friends. With the right understanding of the development process, she emphasized, volunteers can take actions that will facilitate thoughtful relationships needed for development success.

Highlighting the final half day, Women Connected concluded at the American Angus Association headquarters with breakout sessions and tours of the Association and Angus Productions Inc. (API). In the popular breakout sessions, participants chose to meet one-on-one or in small groups to have questions answered.

Heather Bear, Aurora, Ind., chose a one-on-one session in the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) department to answer her questions on expected progeny differences (EPDs). Following the session she said, “I learned exactly what I wanted. The staff member that I spoke with went above and beyond to help me.” About the Association, she added, “I loved it, and everyone was so welcoming and helpful.”

Carla Jurgenson, Atlanta, Ill., shared, “It was great putting faces with the voices I have been hearing over the years. I am proud to say we have a wonderful, caring and cordial staff employed by the Association. Everyone was eager to assist us by answering questions, highlighting their offerings, and encouraging us to utilize all

► Suzy Graven, Cave Creek, Ariz., engaged participants during her opening keynote address, sharing stories of women who blazed trails in the American West.



aspects of what the Association has to offer to members.”

Women Connected brought together a dynamic, diverse group of women from 15 states with at least one common bond, but left with a better understanding of themselves as industry leaders and advocates; of their connection to the Auxiliary, Association and the Angus Foundation; and a connection to a network of women who share their enthusiasm for the Angus breed and all it encompasses.



The American Angus Auxiliary thanks the Angus Foundation for its generous sponsorship of the Women Connected conference, the American Angus Association for hosting the Association tours and breakout sessions, and especially Activities Director Shelia Stannard for her invaluable expertise in helping plan the conference. We thank Certified Angus Beef LCC (CAB) for providing product for a lunch, as well as door prizes and recipes.