

Association Outlook



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Looking Through a Different Eye Glass

The National Junior Shorthorn Show and Youth Conference is behind us as I set down to write this article. The excitement and energy that Shorthorn youth and seniors displayed in Abilene, Texas was extremely gratifying. With the country in a state of confusion due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Governor of Texas began closing businesses and limiting gatherings because of a new spike in Covid-19 cases, and still, the Shorthorn show went on. Shorthorn families came from 22 states for a week of normalcy and this gathering of our Shorthorn family united the breed and the people in it. Those who attended went about business as usual and enjoyed time with friends while making new relationships. We were able to maintain a normal Junior National with all the usual activities. We may be the only breed that was able to do this in 2020. I personally want to thank the ASA staff, the Texas Committee and the AJSA Board for their efforts and the ASA Board for believing we could get it done. There were a few hoops we had to jump through but with the help and support of the folks at the Abilene facility, sponsors, donors, the breed, and most importantly, the youth of the breed, we had a great event!

The National Junior Shorthorn Show & Youth Conference is the largest event of the breed each year. Many focused on the show winners, but I want to point out some of the other activities. This event is building future leaders of our breed and country. The youth of the Shorthorn families are participating in many contests such as Speech, Digital Design, Posters, Arts & Crafts, Photography, Team Sales, Team Fitting, Quiz Bowl, Cattleman's Written Test, Beef Cook-off and Livestock Judging. There were 977 awards presented to the youth of the breed for the 5-day event, in addition to the ribbons for show classes. These activities prepare our

youth for the next level of engagement, regardless of whether they are headed into junior high, high school, college, graduate school or into the workforce. All breeders and supporters who donated or contributed to funding this event are building the future of our country, communities and breed, and it is expensive to finance - over \$225,000 to make it all happen. All the funds come from sponsors, donations and the goodwill of many of you.

The sustainability of this event is very important to our future. The ASA Board has appointed a Resource Development Committee to review funding this event and possible other activities like this in the future. As a result, you will be seeing some new options to invest in our youth coming this fall. For starters, the main fundraiser with the Foundation Heifer will take place at Louisville during the North American as part of Deck the Stalls. This event will be bigger and better with more opportunities than ever. Also, some new concepts for breeders' participation include donating a percentage of a special lot number in all the sales (both live and internet) that breeders could contribute to the youth of the breed. We are also working on designing a way to donate and/or fund donations supporting our youth using the registry. It takes a lot of funding to continue with a first-class event for the Junior program. For some who ask how important this is, a poll taken by attendees at the Impact Conference in 2015, 61% of those attending that forum were past Junior members. It is the future of our breed!

Another new program, "Shorthorn Beef Locally Raised" will be launched in the coming months, promoting the availability of Shorthorn Freezer Meat from Shorthorn producers on Facebook and social media. Members who have product to sell can sign up and will be added to a map; a link to the map will be included

on promotional posts on Facebook. The goal is to connect consumers looking for locally raised beef with the Shorthorn producers. It puts Shorthorn in the consumers view and gives the producers the opportunity to build a relationship with new customers. This can have a tremendous effect on how consumers look at agriculture. The Shorthorn Breed is the Family Friendly breed. It is time to reach out to non-agriculture folks, draw them in and show them how your family farm functions. I encourage Shorthorn members to participate; it can be profitable to raise the beef and sell it directly to the consumer. It also is a wonderful opportunity to invite non-agriculture people to the farm on a Saturday morning to see how you raise the animals and care for them, plus see how your own children interact with the cattle and such. I believe over time this can become a major part of our breed's identity. We have the right kind of cattle to fit this need and even more importantly, the right kind of people to build relationships with those who will pass the experience along to others. This can lead to greater demand and perhaps some new breeders. The positives are endless and it should create additional income for you at the same time. This can become our Branded Beef Program! □

