

A Decade of Jersey Youth Academy

It has been a decade since the first class of Jersey Youth Academy came to Columbus, Ohio, for an intense week of expanding breed knowledge, participating in hands-on activities to learn more about the dairy industry, and having the opportunity to network with peers and industry leaders from across the U.S.

The original goal of Jersey Youth Academy—attracting, educating and retaining talented young people for careers in the Jersey dairy business—was exactly what 36 participants from 18 states experienced from July 14-19, 2019. Class VI of Jersey Youth Academy were rising seniors in high school through college juniors and were selected from a national pool of applicants based on merit, motivation and preparation for the program as reflected in experiences, accomplishments and goal statements.

With full involvement of the Ohio-based staff of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) and National All-Jersey Inc. (NAJ), plus the presidents of both organizations and a roster of outstanding guest speakers, Jersey Youth Academy delivered a comprehensive survey of the Jersey business today, where Jerseys fit the dairy business of tomorrow, and the opportunities for participants to direct their Jersey enthusiasm and personal abilities to

advance the Jersey business of the future.

The Mission

Jersey Youth Academy was designed to achieve three broad objectives:

First, for the participants to learn why and how the Jersey breed has grown and prospered, and what the future holds for the Jersey business;

Second, for them to meet leaders from the Jersey community and from across the support industry, to gain their unique insights about the dairy business with a specific focus on the Jersey cow; and

Third, to learn about the range of career opportunities that involve the Jersey breed and Jersey products, and begin the journey that will take them to success working in the Jersey dairy business.

Since the first Academy, in July of 2009, it has remained a Jersey boot camp with as much content relative to the program's objectives as AJCA-NAJ staff could pack into five days.

To date, 192 different individuals from 35 states have participated in the one-of-a-kind program. The relationships and work with these future leaders does not end when they leave Columbus, it continues for years to come as they join the home dairy or become a member of the dairy industry.

The Program

The total of what they took home from the invited speakers, farm visits and AJCA-NAJ staff interaction was as broad as could be.

"This experience was a building block or stepping stone for many of us," relayed Hannah Diehl, McVeytown, Pa. "I have learned a lot of things from showing and from our farm, but this gave me a more widespread experience and opportunity to learn more things and meet new people in the industry."

"While we were here we visited farms who have different practices and management," continued Diehl. "We saw one where genomics was the main focus, another where implementing new production practices and new technology worked for them, and then a farm where agritourism is important to their on-farm practices as well. It has really opened my eyes to how different farms operate all over."

The variety of topics they were exposed to was echoed by other class members in their exit interviews.

"Just learning the importance of genomics and seeing it is something that is consistent on all the farms, no matter if it is type or production they're looking at or what their cows look like on paper," explained Isabella Kukor, Sarasota, Fla. "Seeing how



The 36 members of Jersey Youth Academy VI are pictured at Pine Tree Dairy along with keynote speaker, Russell Gammon in front. Pictured front row, from left: Hannah Diehl, Meghan Hettinga, Alaina Johnson, Isabella Kukor, Amber Foley, Sarah Alexander, Abby Shaw, Camryn Moyer, Hayley Fernandes, Elizabeth Reis, Hannah Sanders; second row: Mary Holtz, Megan Gilliland, Lydia Chittenden, Sydnie Grossnickle, Lakaya Lyon, Natalie Berry, Madisen Peterson, Bailie Shultz, Kennedy Crothers, Caroline Arrowsmith, Elise Carpenter. Third row: Brennan Topp (Fred Stout Intern), Nathan Merriam, Luke Wolfisberg, Josh Seals, Colin Wussow, Austin Baker, Greg Norris, Jayme Ozburn and Ruth Huettner. Top row: Abby Grimm, Rileigh Mumbulo, Caroline Lafferty, Hannah Diehl, Grace Vos and Maria Joy Pook.

they utilize information in making a better animal for the future was eye-opening. The sky's the limit in that regard. I think the more technology we have and the more information we get the more useful it will be to producers to keep climbing their way up."

Roster of Speakers

The keynote address was presented by Russell Gammon, Fergus, Ont. Gammon spent most of his career with Jersey Canada as Executive Secretary and then as manager of the Global Jersey Program for Semex. Other invited speakers included Scott Higgins, President and CEO of American Dairy Association Midwest; Ralph Gill, National Account Manager for Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Solutions; Stacey Dvorak, Ag Credit Bank Manager; Lyle Ruprecht, Gerber Feeds Nutrition; Zach Berry, ABS Reproduction and Inventory Management; Ron Kling, American Embryo Transfer Association and Kaitlyn Hinds former AJCA staff member and staff member of the Certified Angus Beef team.

At Waterman Dairy, Ohio State University, presentations were made by farm manager John Lemmermen and Rebekah Meller, herd manager and nutritionist, and AJCA Type Appraisers Ron Mosser and Kelly Epperly. Dairy processing tours included Pearl Valley Cheese Inc., Fresno, where President Chuck Ellis and Sally Ellis spoke and guided a tour through the facility. Velvet Ice Cream in Utica provided the class a chance to hear from owners, Joe and Luconda Dager. Levi and Todd Woodruff gave a tour of their milk processing facility as well as a new location recently purchased



Executive Secretary Neal Smith met with groups of Jersey Youth Academy attendees during an office tour in July. While at the AJCA-NAJ offices, the group learned more about what various roles in the association mean.

to work more directly with local Jersey farms to produce Jersey milk products.

Farm tours included a visit to Albright Jerseys LLC, Willard, Ohio. The students toured the dairy and saw their nine robotic milkers in action. At Pine Tree Dairy, Ethan and Andrew Steiner provided a hands-on genomic exercise for the group to learn more about mating individuals to gain genetic ground more quickly. The class also were able to watch the IVF process with Dr. Nate Steiner and Dr. Kling. At Young's Jersey Dairy, the group learned about agri-tourism and their ice cream and cheese production from Stuart Young and participated in a mock auction. After a welcome by President and CEO David Thorbahn, key staff from all departments at Select Sires Inc. presented the many career opportunities and had a parade of bulls including River Valley CeCe Chrome-ET, Dutch Hollow Oliver-P and All Lynns Valentino Irwin-ET.

Participating as Deans at Sunday's opening social and dinner were Ohio breeders Bill Grammer and Jim Billman representing the members of the 2018 Annual Meeting host committee. Presentations were also made by every member of the

AJCA-NAJ management team, Drew Duncan, Assistant General Manager of NAJ; Kaila Tauchen, Assistant Director of Communications and Area Representatives Seth Israelson and Danielle Brown.

Class VII Coming July 2021

Class VII of Academy will be held in July 2021. Applications will be available September 1, 2020, and must be received in the AJCA office by December 1.

As always, all costs, including transportation to Columbus, were paid in full, with the Class VI experience being equivalent to a \$1,800 scholarship.

The endowment of Academy currently sits at \$550,257. Academy was founded on two important drivers, beginning with solid funding. Initial funding for the program was provided by syndication of BW Academy-ET in the 2008 All American Jersey Sale, followed by the all-donation National Heifer Sale in 2011. In addition to general and memorial contributions received throughout the year, a Cow Pie Bingo fundraiser is held regularly.

The Academy is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt private educational foundation under section 501(c)(3). Contributions represent a broad spectrum of Jersey breeder and dairy industry support and can be made at any time by contacting the association office at 614/861-3636.

Editor's note: Reports from previous classes are available at <http://bit.do/JYA>. More stories will soon be on USJerseyJournal.com.



Class VI students learned more about the AJCA Type Appraisal program with appraisers Ron Mosser and Kelly Epperly. The class was broken into small groups and worked to break down a group of cows at Waterman Dairy on the Ohio State campus.