

A New Investment in Youth for The Breed's Future

There are 2,829 junior members of the American Jersey Cattle Association. They have many talents and abilities, a variety of interests, but one very important thing in common—a passion for the Jersey breed.

When a community has young people of such promise in its midst, committed to the very thing that brought that group of people together in the first place, it's just natural to want to nurture them so that they come back into the fold.

That, in a nutshell, is the ultimate aim of the new national Jersey youth development program, Jersey Youth Academy.

On June 25, the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) Board of Directors approved the concept for a four-day intensive

educational program for Jersey youth. Should all go as planned, by late spring 2009 the first Academy class will have been selected and be packing its bags for the trip in late July to Columbus, Ohio.

Once here, they will get a look at the Jersey business, its past and its future, in a way none ever have before. They will meet the movers and shakers in the Jersey community: the producers, the processors, and the marketers of Jersey cattle, Jersey genetics and Jersey consumer products.

They will learn why they should come back into the Jersey business, what choices they have to do that, and how to prepare for success when they do.

But before all that can happen, the Jersey Youth Academy must be funded. And that effort is underway.

Opportunity Searching For A Purpose

The catalyst for creation of the Jersey Youth Academy was an e-mail message this past January from Bob Bignami, who with his late partner Harlan Askeland was the AJCA Master Breeder of 2007.

Bignami offered to donate a bull calf to be sold in The All American Jersey Sale

to raise money for Jersey youth. The calf he offered was a son of the top JPI™ cow in the Brentwood herd of over 1,400 Registered Jerseys™ and the 55th high cow among the more than 120,000 cows on AJCA performance programs, BW Avery Katie ET121-ET. The calf's sire was BW Legion, one of the top bulls for udder traits among proven A.I. sires.

The catch was, Bob Bignami hoped the money could go for something beyond the current youth program. Why? "I thought

endeavor become a reality.

"This is going to be a collaborative effort for all of us to support. Your Board of Directors and staff are committed to seeing Project Academy welcome its first class in the summer of 2009."

Bringing The Next Generation Into The Jersey Business

The need that the Jersey Youth Academy will serve is very real, particularly when one considers how its success could shape the direction of the Jersey business in the years and decades ahead.

"One of the biggest challenges in our industry," Bignami asserts, "is to attract the next generation of managers. We have to compete with many more glamorous occupations for these individuals.

"Conversely, young people with a passion for the Jersey cow many times are at a loss as to how to translate that interest into a career," he continues.

"Project Academy will strive to bridge that gap."

"A program like this has been needed for a long, long time," concurs Neal Smith, Executive Secretary and CEO of the AJCA and National All-Jersey Inc.

"Youth is our future. Because the Jersey breed is growing, we need to encourage a lot more young people to return to the farm or the dairy industry after growing up on the dairy with Jerseys.

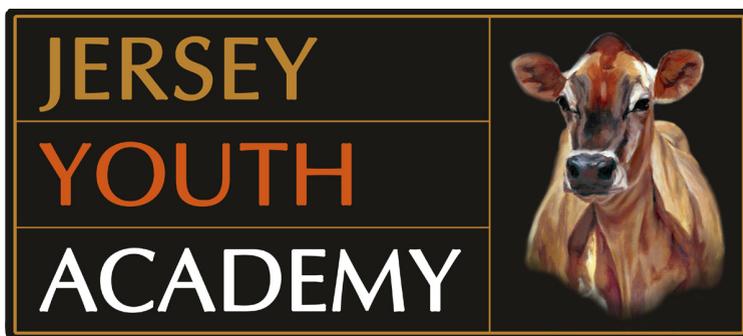
"These are the people that we need the most, if we are going to continue growing the Jersey breed and take it to new heights in the United States."

"We expect this to be a win-win proposition for all," adds Bignami.

Program Launch: July of 2009

In the wake of President Chamberlain's announcement on June 26, questions have flooded in: about when and where the program will be held; what will be presented in the program; and how the class will be selected.

The answers to those questions reflect, first, the fact that planning is ongoing, and, second, that exactly what can be done will depend upon the success of the immediate fundraising efforts.



that as the breed organization, we should be searching out projects that needed to be done."

That is exactly what happened. Over a period of several weeks, a continuous brainstorming session emerged, involving a number of different Jersey owners, AJCA elected leadership and association staff. Thinking through the current youth program and where it could be strengthened, the kernel of the Academy idea—to encourage, guide and train interested young people for careers in management on Jersey dairies and the associated support fields—was born.

In short order, the AJCA Board accepted Bignami's offer of the bull—now named BW Academy—ET—and moved to fast-track program development for 2009.

"Bob Bignami has been extremely generous in donating this well-bred calf to kick off funding for an Academy for Jersey youth," AJCA President David Chamberlain said when the program was revealed June 26 during the 2008 annual meetings in North Carolina. "We especially thank Bob and his wife Pam for their vision and foresight to motivate us all toward making this worthwhile

Neal Smith is so confident of the response to the Academy fundraising drive as to state, "Our first Academy will be held during the last week of July 2009 in Columbus at the Ohio State University campus, and we will also make use of the AJCA and National All-Jersey offices here in Reynoldsburg."

The target group for the first Academy class will be youth starting their junior year of high school in the fall of 2009, to students a year or more from finishing at vocational school, college or university.

All costs for each individual selected to participate in the program will be paid by the Academy. Selection will be based on an evaluation of merit, motivation and preparation for the program as reflected in the written application and goal statement submitted by the applicants.

Program Outlined

The Academy's curriculum is based on three broad objectives:

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

Second, 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.

To achieve those aims, the program will present keynote and motivational speakers, along with panels of Jersey dairy owners and product marketers, and also experts from key service areas that support the Jersey business.

Field trips are planned to Jersey operations to learn how they were built by their owners into successful businesses, as well as manufacturing, marketing and consumer retail operations.

There will be short seminars about Jersey cattle genetics, management and product marketing, and about the emerging technologies that will shape how Jersey dairies are run, cattle are managed, and products developed and marketed.

Finally, sessions are being planned that

will introduce the participants to tools that will help them identify personal strengths, develop communication competence, and learn how to build effective teams.

Of course, it won't be all work and no play. The group will be able to take advantage of recreational facilities on the Ohio State campus and enjoy planned evening entertainment.

Passing Along The Very Long Institutional Memory of Jersey

At the same time, the Academy class will receive a wealth of institutional memory and knowledge that has accumulated within the American Jersey Cattle Association since its organization in 1868.

"We think the next generation needs to know about the decisions that were made that led to the success the Jersey breed is enjoying today," asserts the Jersey CEO.

"I think we have that responsibility to those who have gone before us.

"Board members and leaders of the Jersey organizations for generations have made tough decisions, they've taken risk for the betterment of the Jersey business. Some of the decisions they made were not

The mission of the Jersey Youth Academy is to attract, educate and retain talented young people for careers in the Jersey dairy business. It will be achieved through cooperative efforts of the American Jersey Cattle Association and National All-Jersey Inc., Jersey owners everywhere, and allied industry.

popular, even among a majority of the members who were active at the time.

"We owe it to them to see to it that the next generation has a clear understanding of how we got to where we are, and what we're going to have to do—the kind of decisions we're going to have to make—to continue the kind of progress that we've been making in the last couple of decades.

"I'd like to hope that through the Academy, we can achieve a more distinct connection with the next generation and previous generations."

Concept Endorsed By Dollars

It should come as no surprise that once the Academy concept was announced June 26, it was met with an immediate endorsement in dollars.

On the spur of the moment, \$16,325 was raised for the new youth program on the

evening of June 28 at the 51st National Heifer Sale.

It started when retiring AJCA Director Eric Lyon donated the proceeds of the farm's consignment to the Academy fund in memory of past-Director and Master Breeder, John Bishop VI. That spurred additional donations, from past-President Paul Chittenden; current NAJ Directors Kelly Moss and Jim Huffard; North Carolina Jersey breeder Max Leonard; and, on top of his donation that started it all, Bob Bignami himself.

That opened the bank account for the Jersey Youth Academy, but it's far from what will be needed for the Academy to become a reality in nine months.

So, between now and November 9, BW Academy-ET "will be the catalyst for our fundraising efforts," says Neal Smith. "This bull will help us get off to a really good start, and build a lot of enthusiasm for the fundraising effort."

"Our initial goal, to get this program off on the right foot, is a quarter-of-a-million dollars," Smith states. "In general, it will be a joint effort from Jersey breeders around the country as well as hopefully all the industry participation that we can enlist."

To Add Your Support

To participate in the BW Academy-ET fundraising challenge that concludes at The All American Jersey Sale, go to the USJersey web site (www.usjersey.com)

and click on the link in the left-hand column for "Academy Support."

An information page about the Jersey Youth Academy has been created at www.usjersey.com/YouthProgram/JerseyYouthAcademy.htm. Updates will be posted as program details are completed.

For now, log on to hear Neal Smith talk about the Academy's purpose and the fall fundraising campaign.

A Closing Thought

"Through the generosity of Jersey enthusiasts everywhere we can achieve this," Smith adds. "We have to have the support of as broad a spectrum of Jersey breeders and industry organizations as possible.

"We believe that there is really a golden opportunity here for everyone involved to benefit."
