

Youth are inspired by

KEY

Knowledge Empowers Youth

CONFERENCE

by Jake Gankofskie



IOWA 2011

Junior members gathered in Ames, Iowa from across the country to participate in KEY. 27 youth were in attendance for the leadership conference.

Six years ago the American Junior Shorthorn Association (AJSA) set out to develop a program that would not only inspire and encourage youth to follow their dreams, but allow them to learn from and interact with industry leaders who have. The result, a conference called KEY, which stands for Knowledge Empowers Youth.

Since the first KEY Conference at Purdue University, the AJSA has held the program at campuses throughout the Midwest giving youth a chance to visit some of the nation's finest universities.

"Empowering youth through knowledge, networks and notability has always been the goal of KEY Conference and this year's conference was no exception," said Gwen Crawford, KEY Conference coordinator.

The 2011 conference was held in Ames, Iowa at Iowa State University and attracted 30 people from 12 states, which made the 2011 conference the second largest to date.

The conference kicked off Friday, July 22, with a number of icebreaker activities that allowed juniors to become more acquainted with one

another. Following the introductory session's youth attended a lecture by Mike Anderson, Iowa State University 4-H Extension, where participants learned about innovations in livestock identification systems focusing on retinal scanning.

After leaving the Iowa State University Extension headquarters, youth toured the ISU Beef and Dairy Units. While touring the beef unit, herdsman Marshall Ruble gave a brief presentation on pelvic measuring, pregnancy checking and history of ISU's cattle program. During the tour students had the chance to watch Ruble and his student's take pelvic measurements and ultrasound several head of cattle. Only a couple miles down the road from the beef unit was Iowa State's new dairy facility, where juniors were able to sample ice cream that was made by the University's Dairy Club and tour the state of the art milking parlor and facilities.

Conference participants finished the day with dinner at the university's cafeteria, several leadership challenges and bowling at the Student Union where AJSA board member Hannah Winegardner scored an all time low.

Taking the leadership reins Saturday morning were AJSA board members Autumn Robison, Ashley Vogel and Karl Miller with their leadership activity, "Burger Builder", where youth had to work in groups to piece together the elements of a traditional hamburger that were written on sticky notes and placed on each others backs without using the specific items name.

American Shorthorn Association



During a tour to Nichols Cryo Genetics, owner Jay Steenhoek shows juniors one of the large semen tanks at the facility.

Director of Registrations Gwen Crawford then gave an instructional lesson on common issues regarding cattle registration, followed by ASA Director of Genetic Improvement and ISU Alum Patrick Wall's presentation on contemporary groups and the All-American Junior Breeder program. Wall encouraged seniors to apply and participate in the ASA's latest program.

Following the ASA staff presentations, junior board members Hannah Winegardner, Emily Moore and Joseph O'Sullivan engaged youth in their "Loss of Lyrics" leadership activity where teams were given a specific word and had to sing the lyrics to a song that included the word that was assigned to them. Juniors also took part in a group knot tying activity as well as a Jeopardy game.

After spending the morning on campus participants traveled to Ankeny, Iowa to visit Nichols Cryo Genetics. Owner Jay Steenhoek gave a brief overview of their semen collection



Several opportunities to participate in activities was definitely had at KEY Conference. Above participants show off their successful balloon tower.

procedures and the future of the AI industry. The group then toured the facilities and enjoyed looking back at the generations of bulls who's pictures were displayed in the office.

"It was neat to see so many bulls that have influenced the beef industry," said Jake Alden, ASA Field Services Representative. "I think it's important for juniors to understand how far we have come using innovations such as AI."

Then juniors headed to Brookside Park in Ames and enjoyed a barbeque beef dinner sponsored by Cyclone Trace Cattle Company. While at the park the group tapped into their competitive side while playing sand volleyball, where participants split into three teams and spent the remainder of the afternoon getting their game on.

The group then returned to campus



Sarah Moore, Ill., competes in the "Minute to Win It" cup stacking contest.

to finish their egg drop activity and participate in a balloon tower exercise that was put on by junior board members James Sullivan, Luke Bolin and John Reasor. Participants then found themselves engaged and intrigued by Crawford's motivational lecture, as she focused on finding the positives in your day-to-day life and achieving your dreams with a positive attitude. Following Crawford's inspirational message, youth participated in a series of "Minute to Win It" games and rounded out the evening racing the clock partaking in various 60 second challenges.

On the final day of the conference youth were treated to a breakfast buffet sponsored by Elanco Animal Health. Afterwards, Elanco representative Amanda Wall discussed current and future risks concerning the world's food supply and urged the group to take a leadership roll in the agricultural industries.

As the conference came to an end, juniors spent the rest of their time on campus partaking in leadership and communication activities, where Beth Foreman of Iowa State University's Department of Student Affairs stressed the importance of communicating in a group setting. After a final farewell the conference participants departed the

campus with an enlightened sense of what it takes to be a leader.

"KEY Conference allowed me to meet juniors from other states and get to know the junior board," said

Gerrit Pearson, AJSA member from South Dakota. "I would like to be more active in the association and one day run for the junior board."

The development of the juniors' leadership skills were witnessed by the ASA staff as well as the conference hosts, who really believe in the future of the youth. Crawford elaborated on how beneficial the youth conference has been for everyone who has attended.

"KEY Conference is an opportunity where juniors 14-21 have the ability to not only develop leadership skills that can be used in their future, but also a place where they are able to gain new friendships, experience a new college campus and expand their knowledge on the current issues of the agricultural industry," Crawford said. "I enjoy watching these young individuals come together and grow through this short period of time while they attend KEY Conference. A common theme among the new attendees is how much fun they had, how much they learned and how they plan to attend in the future," she added.

(Below): Christian Morris, Minnesota, carefully stacks bolts for another competitive game. (Bottom right): All conference attendees pose for a photo at Brookside Park.

