

## Making a Difference in the Dairy Industry

Inspirational and Informational. Two words heard repeatedly as 31 Jersey youth from 15 states headed out the doors of the American Jersey Cattle Association in mid-July upon completion of Class VII of Jersey Youth Academy. The group completed a weeklong journey discovering careers within the Jersey and dairy industries July 11-16, 2021, in Ohio.

“Inspirational and extremely informational, are the two words I would use to describe my Jersey Youth Academy experience,” said class member Sophia Larson, Reedsburg, Wis. “I have a pretty strong dairy background, but I learned so much this week. It was worth the time to come here and means a lot to be able to have this opportunity. We all should be beyond grateful for this program and having the chance to be a part of it.”

“The opportunities and connections we were given this week were outstanding,” agreed Jacqueline Mudd, Berne, Ind. “An absolutely amazing experience.”

During the week, Class VII was introduced to representatives of key support agencies and allied industry. Corey Geiger, editor of Hoard’s Dairyman, challenged the group to “Make a Difference.” Charlie Garrison of



**Corey Geiger**

The Garrison Group talked about his dairy roots and how he chose to be a lobbyist in Washington D.C. on behalf of the agricultural industry. The group visited five diverse Jersey dairies and learned about robotic milking systems, on-farm processing, a cheese plant, strategies for genotyping, agri-tourism, hands on workshops for Linear Type Appraisal and JerseyTags, and were part of a history making announcement for Select Sires.

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 diverse farming operations and guest speakers, Jersey Youth Academy delivered a comprehensive survey of the Jersey business today, how 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.



During the tour to Select Sires the class of Jersey Youth Academy was presented with commemorative semen straws with “Jersey Youth Academy 2021” printed on them. The group of 31 students were the first to tour the new distribution facility being built. Showing off their straws were Keenan Thygesen, Ali Bowman, Elizabeth Hyman, Grace Stroud, Mia Berry, Jessica Hewitt and Jack Zina.

The participants included rising seniors in high school through college juniors. They were selected from a national pool of applicants based on merit, motivation and preparation for the program as reflected in their experiences, accomplishments and goal statements.

Set in motion more than a decade ago, Academy’s aims—to attract, educate and retain talented young people for careers in the Jersey dairy business—informed a program highlighted by a multitude of presentations, farm visits, hands-on workshops, face-to-face conversations with industry experts and fellowship with peers. “From the day I found out I was accepted

throughout the entire trip and even coming back home to Pennsylvania, I was eager,” said Laura Caruso. “I was eager in the beginning for the learning possibilities and eager when I got home to put everything I learned to work.”

“Not only is this an incredible program to learn more about the breed, but I was able to take advantage of this opportunity with like-minded people that have the same passions,” stated Grace Stroud, Canadea, N.Y. “I want to impact the Jersey breed as much as it has impacted me. I am looking forward to applying genomic testing tools in my herd to help the breed association gain information to advance my herd and the breed as a whole.”

“Epic,” described Nicole Arrowsmith, Peach Bottom, Pa., of her Academy experience. “This program pushed me out of my comfort zone and pushed me to try new things and expanded my knowledge in so many areas.”

### The Program

As the program opened on Sunday evening on the campus of Ohio Dominican

*The 31 class members of Jersey Youth Academy VII are pictured on the front cover of this issue. Pictured front row, from left: Emily Rook, Evan Cooper, Jack Zina, Von Herron, Barry Nadon, Tyler Seals, Keenan Thygesen and Alison Graves. Middle row, from left: Hartley Silva, Nicole Arrowsmith, Elizabeth Hyman, Ali Bowman, Mia Berry, Addie Raber, Kylie Konyon, Gabby Rockwell, Grace Stroud, Jessica Hewitt, Sophie Larson, Laura Caruso and Miriam Cook. Back row from left: Jacqueline Mudd, Emma Vos, Aspen Silva, Summer Schepper, Rachel Anderson, Morgan Osborn-Wothlie, Madelynn Hoffman, Gracie Krahn, Kaitlyn Poitras, and Maleah Sickinger.*

University, Executive Secretary Neal Smith welcomed the group and gave a brief overview of the Jersey breed and history, before talking to them about the class expectations and plans for the week. The group was then treated to a first in Jersey Youth Academy history—international presentations by Jersey breeders from Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Jersey Isle and South Africa. The countries submitted videos showcasing geography, philosophies, the Jersey cow and other demographics from within their countries.

Early the next day, the class convened in a classroom setting for a morning of learning more about Jersey pedigrees, genomics, identification and how the tools of the AJCA could be applied to decisions they make in the dairy industry.

“Throughout the week, genomics was definitely the biggest thing I learned to take home and apply to my herd,” said Jessica Hewitt, Molalla, Ore. “Before I got here, I had a general understanding. After leaving I have a deeper understanding of the importance of the science.”

“I learned a lot from the presentation on how to read a pedigree,” said Laura Caruso, Acme, Pa. “It was very useful to fully understand what all of the numbers and terms meant. It is very important whether you are looking from a business perspective or looking for a well-designed show cow.”

Evan Cooper, New Braintree, Mass., stated, “The genomic discussions we had opened my eyes to the many ways that genomics can be utilized. Before Jersey Youth Academy, I didn’t pay a lot of attention to the science. Now, I realized there is money to be made by utilizing this tool in any size herd.”

As the class absorbed their lessons from

the morning, they took a trip to Waterman Dairy on Ohio State University’s campus. During their time at the dairy, Rebekah Meller, dairy manager and nutritionist, gave a tour of the dairy and talked about upcoming plans for adding robots to the dairy in the heart of Columbus, Ohio.

Ron Mosser, Senior Type Traits Evaluator for the American Jersey Cattle Association, along with appraisers Danielle Brown, Sydney Endres and Greg Lavan, gave an in-depth session on the AJCA Type Traits Evaluation system.

David McEhlaney, of AllFlex, talked to the youth about identification and the many tools offered with using eartags, from tissue sampling to heat detection.

“I learned the most during our linear appraisal activity and during the pedigree presentation,” said Madelynn Hoffman, Manheim, Pa. “I did not realize how many traits an appraiser evaluates in less than a minute. Also, the pedigrees have so much information that is typically overlooked. I use to look just at scores, type and the physical appearance of the animal. Now I examine JUI and wellness traits more heavily.”

On Tuesday, the class visited Albright Jerseys LLC, Willard, Ohio, and talked with experts about IVF procedures, nutrition in a robotic herd, and ag lending. In the afternoon, the group visited Clover Patch Dairy, Millersburg, Ohio, and talked with Alan and Sharon Kozak about their intensive grazing herd. The couple talked about calf nutrition and gave a JerseyMate presentation to show how Alan manages the matings in his 400-plus cow herd.

Kaitlyn Hinds, Associate Manager, Brand Experience and Education at Certified Angus Beef (CAB), joined the group

and talked about the history of the CAB program and how important branding is to building a product.

“Albright Jerseys was the most impactful stop for me,” said Von Herron, Salem, Ohio. “They have a similar set up to what I want to see on our family farm. I could tell they have thought about every detail on their dairy and where they want to go with it. I enjoyed going around the different stations and learning about different aspects of the farm.”

“I took home several things to apply at home, but the new calf feeding standards and nutritional facts for both cows and calves I have used the most,” said Jessica Hewitt.

“The visits to the Ohio State University dairy and Albright Jerseys were the most impactful to me,” said Madelynn Hoffman. “These two farms are currently navigating the financial waters and have made some executive decisions such as culling and installing robots to make ends meet. I think it is admirable that these farms are adapting in a time many farms are leaving the business.”

On Wednesday, milk marketing was the featured topic as Erick Metzger, General Manager of National All-Jersey Inc., presented to the group. After his presentation he introduced Charlie Garrison, president of The Garrison Group and NAJ lobbyist in Washington D.C., to talk about his dairy background and policy in D.C.

“We had the opportunity to be in the audience during Charlie Garrison’s presentation,” said Gracie Krahn, Albany, Ore. “Although he clicked through more than 20 slides, what impacted me most was the discussion on obtaining a proper work force.

*(continued to page 22)*



During a tour stop at Albright Jerseys LLC, owner Fred Albright shared the history of the dairy with the group. He discussed the logic behind many of the decisions made to bring the next generation into the dairy and keep it sustainable for years to come.



Each year Jersey Youth Academy culminates with a tour stop to Young’s Jersey Dairy. The agri-tourism stop is among the favorites in Ohio. Owner Stuart Young talked with the class about their story and diversification beginning in the 1950s with their Jersey herd.



Summer Schepper breaks down one of the young cows at Ohio State University using the Type Traits Appraisal data from USJersey. Senior appraiser Ron Mosser led the discussion and worked with the class to understand the traits used to determine a final score.

## Jersey Youth Academy

(continued from page 21)

There is no question in my mind that dairy farmers across the country are suffering through a labor shortage, however I did not grasp the details as to why. Through Charlie's presentation we were able to take a deep dive into the legal ramifications of securing a workforce as well as the specifics that dairy farmers must provide for their employees. "

Corey Geiger of Hoard's Dairyman then took the stage and talked to the class about the importance of being selfless and have a servant heart. He paid tribute to the many people that have shaped his career in the dairy industry with his inspirational and motivating words to the class.

"Corey said in his presentation, 'See the glass as half full, not half empty,'" said Mia Berry, Sherwood, Ore. "Live with a more positive mindset, find other servant leaders in your life who have been challenging you. Find the different perspective. These are words that all of us can use. I am getting ready to start college and I know I will face some failure. We need to learn from that and not be hung up on the negative. Learn from your mistakes."

Visits that afternoon were to Pearl Valley Cheese in Fresno, Ohio, and then the evening was capped off by a 'Sunset Safari' at the Wilds in Cumberland, Ohio.

"I am looking at Zoology as a possible career," said Nicole Arrowsmith. "From the trip to The Wilds, I now have a better understanding of what classes to focus on from talking with the zoo keepers and tour guides there."

Thursday was a day to remember for the Class with their visit to Select Sires, Inc., Plain City, Ohio. While at the A.I. facility, it was announced that River Valley CeCe Chrome-ET had just become the highest selling Jersey bull in Select Sires history. The class was a part of the promotional release from Select Sires and had their photo taken with the legendary sire. In addition, the group was the first to tour the new distribution center being built on the Select Sires campus. Many of the Select Sires staff shared the role their department plays in the process of matings, making semen, selling, and marketing each unit produced.

"Touring Select Sires was by far the most impactful tour stop for me," said Laura Caruso. "I never realized until after the presentations about what all goes into making one little straw of semen. It takes an army to create the desired product."

The class then made their way to the agri-tourism and on-farm processing stops of the week—Woodruff Jersey Farm and Young's Jersey Dairy.

"Do one thing first and do it right—a

quote from Todd Woodruff—has stuck with me," said Barry Nadon, West Brookfield, Mass. "I really would like to do on-farm processing at home and he gave us many ideas."

"Being from California, it is in your head that you need to be as big as you can for success," said Aspen Silva, Modesto, Calif. "Coming here and seeing the smaller dairies owning their own plants, making milk, making cheese and doing what they love is eye-opening to see that you can do what you want in smaller markets."

"For me, Woodruff Dairy and Processing facility was unforgettable." Said Miriam Cook, Pewamo, Mich. "Their processing facility was breathtaking and on the cusp of groundbreaking entrepreneurial steps with some of the best chocolate milk I have had the chance to enjoy! The farm was full of high-quality cattle, but the family made the farm and facility complete. With his many business ventures, Todd Woodruff lives up to his philosophy, 'If you aren't living on the edge then you are taking up too much space.'"

The evening concluded with the much anticipated mock auction. Teams had worked together all week to form strategies to buy smart with their purchases. In the end, three teams joined forces to form a syndicate and purchased the majority of the animals (under market value) to earn bragging rights.

A tour of the AJCA offices in Reynoldsburg, was the last stop for Class VII of Jersey Youth Academy before heading home on Friday. Stations around the office allowed the class to interact with USJersey staff and learn more about the programs that are offered. They had hands-on demonstrations with the online tools offered by USJersey and many went away with a better understanding of the association's core program—REAP.

"I learned this week the many aspects of REAP that the Oklahoma State University herd isn't utilizing," said Ali Bowman, Glencoe, Okla. "I am definitely going to be discussing BullsEye, genomics, and HerdView when I get back to school and hopefully encourage them to utilize it in the school program.

Emma Vos, Maribel, Wis., shared her thoughts on USJersey programs, "There is so much value in the AJCA programs. It doesn't matter the size of the herd, the programs fit all."

### The Takeaway Lessons

"Everything this week was incredibly valuable to me," added Gabby Rockwell, Scenery Hill, Pa. "The diversity of what we experienced was great. From visiting Al-brights Jerseys LLC and seeing nine robots



A trip to The Wilds was added to the Academy program this year. The Sunset Safari featured an opportunity to ask questions of the grounds and animal managers as well as learn more about the habitats of many of the wild animals in captivity. The Wilds consists of more than 10,000 acres of conservational land in southeast Ohio.

working, to Woodruffs and Young's Jersey Dairy, where they milk smaller numbers of cows—t showed me that everyone does things differently but is very successful in what they do."

"This week inspired me to continue to follow in my grandparents path and reach for the goal of being a Master Breeder one day," said Tyler Seals, Tillamook, Ore.

"My biggest takeaway this week was learning more about the impact of genetics and nutrition to the milking herd to impact milk values more quickly," stated Jack Zina, Hadley, Mass. "Taking that back home to our farm and milk bottling program will help continue to produce the highest quality milk."

"I am not sure how my peers absorbed this trip, but I know it has caused me to reevaluate my college plans, changed the direction of my herd and my perspective of the dairy industry's future," Madelynn Hoffman.

"Every day was valuable for employment opportunities," said Rachel Anderson.

"The whole week was valuable," said Sophia Larson. "The reassurance from people that if you don't have it all figured out right now, that is okay. That really hit home for me. Knowing what all we have access to throughout the industry was really valuable."

### Surprise ending

As the graduates of Class VII left their weeklong adventure, Executive Secretary Neal Smith told them, "This experience isn't over, there is still more to come."

On September 25, the 'more to come' was revealed via a social media post on Facebook.

Robert and Pam Bignami of Brentwood Farms, Orland, Calif., had an added bonus for Class VII. In 2020 at The All American Jersey Sale, the couple donated \$60,000 from the proceeds of BW Graduate-ET to

(continued to page 22)

## Jersey Youth Academy

*(continued from page 21)*

enhance the National Jersey Youth Development programs of the AJCA. They set aside \$40,000 to establish the Brentwood Farms scholarship (beginning in 2022) and another \$20,000 to enhance the experience this year's Jersey Youth Academy class. Their hope, to change the lives of some of our brightest youth in the dairy industry.

Nine class members were selected throughout the week as an anonymous committee worked behind the scenes to learn more about the class, where they came from, and their life goals and plan of action. These nine students are each being awarded a trip to an impactful Jersey event in the next two years. (winners and their trips are on page 21)

While this was unique to this class, Bignami and USJersey staff are hopeful it can happen again in the future. The Jersey Youth Academy is recognized by the International Revenue Service as a tax-exempt private educational foundation under section 501(c)(3). Initial funding was provided by syndication of BW Academy-ET with major funding coming from the all-donation National Heifer Sale in 2011. In addition to general and memorial contributions received throughout the year, the Cow Pie Bingo fundraiser is held in conjunction with the AJCA-NAJ Annual Meetings. 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.

### **Class VIII, 2023**

In the seven classes of Jersey Youth Academy completed to date, 223 different individuals from 38 states have participated. All costs for each individual selected to participate in the program were paid from the Academy's endowment fund. Each experience is equivalent to a \$1,800 scholarship.

The eighth Jersey Youth Academy will be held in July of 2023. Applications will be available September 1, 2022, and must be received in the AJCA office by December 1. Applicants must be legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, with the requirement that they will be seniors in high school the fall of 2022 or post-secondary students with at least one year remaining in their degree program at an accredited vocational school, college or university.