

# Facelift

*The Angus Journal gets a new design and new direction.*

by **SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS,**  
*freelancer*

Six months in the making, the *Angus Journal* publication's brand new design melds bigger and easier-to-read typefaces with dynamic photographs and visual graphics to create an overall reading experience that's both informative and fun.

The *Angus Journal's* bright new facelift — along with one coming soon for the *Angus Beef Bulletin* — is

just one part of many positive changes in the works at Angus Productions Inc. (API), the for-profit media arm of the American Angus Association in Saint Joseph, Mo. The company's burst of energy largely stems from President Rick Cozzitorto and General Manager Sara Reardon, who both came on board with API in mid-2017. Together, the two share a strong commitment to the Angus breed.

## **New direction**

As API's top leader, Cozzitorto

brings years of experience in livestock sales and marketing, establishing partnerships, and inspiring staff members to strive for their personal best.

"We want to be the leader in service and technology," he says, "and take our customers to the next level through advertising campaigns, sale books, websites and videos so they'll get more bang for their bucks. We plan to train our regional managers so they can better help our customers with their promotional plans. We're

## **Customer-focused**

### *Rick Cozzitorto takes the helm of Angus media arm.*

A large, dry-erase board hangs on a wall in Rick Cozzitorto's office at Angus Productions Inc. (API) in Saint Joseph, Mo. Across the white board are four handwritten columns of concepts, goals and tasks. On his first day on the job as new API president in June 2017, Cozzitorto spent several hours penning the chart in green ink.

His bottom line: People matter, no matter whether they're American Angus Association members, customers or API employees.

"It's always about the people," says Cozzitorto, seated at his desk on a gray November afternoon. "People, products, processes — you need all of these to make a company successful, but it starts with the culture within the company. We've got great people here at API, but they've done the same thing for 25 years. Now, we're asking them to change and serve our customers in an even better way.

"That said, we're a service organization," he continues. "One of my primary goals here at API is to improve our customer experience. We're going to do that one customer at a time. Beyond that, our ultimate goal is to help our breeders make more money and market their cattle even better. As their go-to resource, we want to take their operations to the next level."

Cozzitorto knows what he's talking about. As a business executive and team leader with more than 20 years of experience, he's well-versed in livestock marketing, product sales and employee management.

"Rick brings a unique perspective to his role as president of Angus Productions Inc.," says Allen Moczygemba, American Angus Association CEO. "He's been involved with the Association as an employee, a member and as a customer, which provides him with a broad perspective. And when you factor in his extensive business experience, I can't imagine anyone more suited to lead Angus Productions than Rick."

## **Ag heritage**

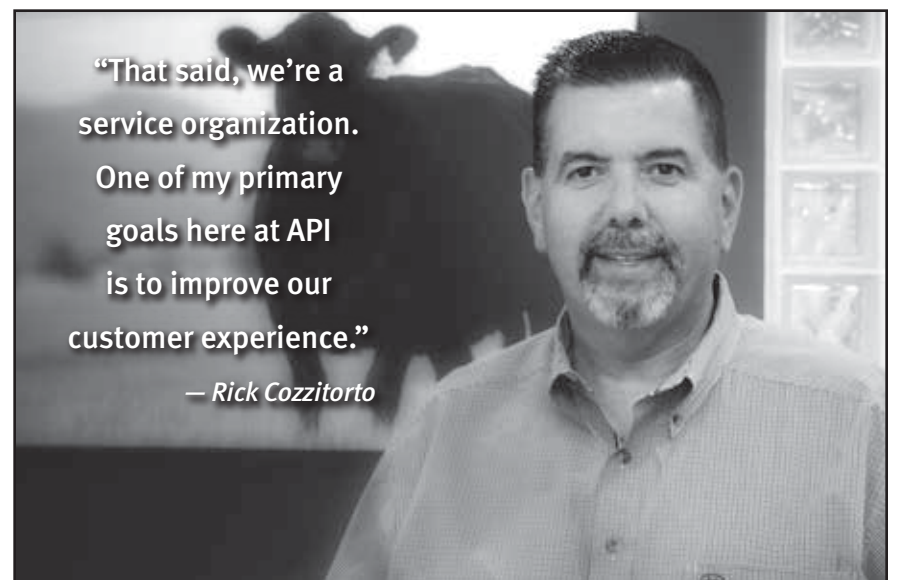
Cozzitorto — an Italian surname pronounced "CAUSE-zuh-tor-toe" — has deep roots in rural agriculture and the Angus breed.

"My grandfather immigrated in 1912 from Italy to Gustine, California," tells Cozzitorto, the fifth of six children. "He died before I was born. Our family had a farm and dairy. We also grew walnuts and alfalfa. We ran the dairy operation until 1977, then we bought our first Angus cows and started building a herd. When I was 11, I decided that I wanted to be a registered Angus breeder."

After high school, he figured he'd go straight to work in the cattle business, but his employer at the time had other ideas.

"I took care of show cattle for James Bright in Merced, California," Cozzitorto says. "He insisted I go to college. He even said I couldn't work for him unless I did."

Reluctantly, Cozzitorto agreed. In 1992, he graduated from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, with



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— Rick Cozzitorto

a bachelor's degree in animal science and industry. That same year, after judging a cattle show at the Washington County Fair in nearby Brenham, he decided to attend a street dance with his college roommates. As it happened, so did Melissa Vyvlecka, a Texas A&M University journalism major. Introduced by a mutual friend, the couple hit it off. They married in 1995 and have one daughter, Alexandria, who's 17.

In 1994, Cozzitorto accepted a job as regional manager with the American Angus Association. For four years, he met with producers in California, Nevada and Arizona to help them identify herd goals, learn about new Association products and services, and market their cattle.

"Looking back, being a regional manager was the best job I've ever

had," Cozzitorto says. "I still can't believe they paid me to visit with members and look at Angus cattle."

From 1998 to 2001, he and Melissa ran RMC Marketing, an Angus sales management company in Merced, Calif. During that time, he was also co-founder and CEO of TC Publishing, which produced the *California Cattleman* magazine.

## **Midwest move**

In 2001, Cozzitorto accepted a position with AgriLabs, and the family moved east to Saint Joseph, Mo.

"I learned a lot about the animal health industry," says Cozzitorto, who worked as a business unit manager for the animal health company. "On the job, I met with cattle producers and filled their needs for healthier animals.

also working on better customer experiences, one customer at a time. We've got a lot of customers, and that's how we're going to accomplish that goal — one at a time."

For her part, Reardon's organizational skills in creative communications, multimedia marketing, and strategy and project management will escalate API to new levels of success.

"It's all about leveraging multiple media channels to engage your audience," she says. "Our professional team members here at API know how to do that, and we will provide unrivaled service and opportunity for our Angus breeders."

Such enthusiasm at a leadership level has brought a new excitement to the API staff.

"The combined passion of Rick and Sara is a real gift, and we need that as an organization," says Shauna Hermel, *Angus Journal* editor.

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During my four years there, I worked with Brian Reardon, the husband of Sara Reardon, who's now API general manager. Sara gave our daughter her first horseback ride at age 4."

A professional opportunity led the family to move to Fort Collins, Colo. There, Cozzitorto worked as regional sales manager for the High Plains region with the Schering-Plough Corp. (now Merck), an animal health company. In his 12 years with Merck Animal Health, Cozzitorto — who transferred to Kansas City in 2008 — was promoted four times and managed four different U.S. livestock divisions.

"In my last 16 months as executive director for the U.S. cattle business, I managed 100 employees," he says. "I'm most proud of the staff that I left with Merck. The company has a great team that will propel Merck's future success."

Melissa, who's seated at a round conference table in her husband's office on this particular day, agrees. "For Rick, it's always about the people," she says, "the people that you surround yourself with to meet your (the organization's) goals."

**Editor's Note:** Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a freelance writer from Blanco, Texas.

*New leadership is adding energy to API's mission to increase demand for registered Angus cattle by being an indispensable partner to the beef industry, providing leading-edge information and marketing strategies through a unique range of print and digital platforms.*



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“We are committed and passionate about helping our customers through our marketing department,” she emphasizes. We want to supply information and resources that will keep our breeders at the forefront of the industry.

“The *Angus Journal* is a reflection of the Angus business and a window to what’s to come,” she continues. It should be the first

resource that breeders use to plan their future.”

**The facelift**

The *Angus Journal’s* much cleaner, more streamlined look is the second since Hermel became editor in 1997.

“We’d been wanting to do a redesign for a long time, but it was put off for

various reasons,” she explains. “One of the goals that we stressed to our designer was that we want the magazine to be more inviting and less intimidating, connecting with additional information online. We want to brighten our look and set the tone for what’s to come. We also want to be more appealing to the younger generation within our membership, and we know

they are not as loyal to print.”

Readers will also notice that the magazine’s editorial content is organized into four sections — Your Herd, Your Business, Your Association and Your Life.

“In his book *I Dare You!*, William Danforth, who founded Ralston-Purina in 1894, said four key components —

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### Celebrating Youth, Education, Research

The annual Angus Foundation Supporter Recognition Event recognized generous donors from the Angus breed and beef industry.

The Angus Foundation, the not-for-profit arm of the American Angus Association, has donated to the future of youth, education and research for the Angus breed and beef industry for more than 50 years.

The Angus Foundation commemorated the many generous donors and accomplishments for 2017 at the annual Supporter Recognition Event, hosted Nov. 9 at the Crown Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas, prior to the start of the 2017 National Angus Convention.

The event honored Angus Foundation supporters who have contributed \$20 or more during the past fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2016 to Sept. 30, 2017) — each gift helping to reach the milestone of \$20,000,000.

“The future of the Angus breed is certainly bright, thanks to the generosity of the Angus Foundation’s incredible donors,” said Mikiel

Richard (The Rock) and C.J. (Sweet) Smith. “The Past Leads Us to Our Future.”

In addition, Angus Foundation president “The 57 years, the Angus Foundation has been leading the way into the future for Angus youth, education and research efforts.”

More than 575 attendees enjoyed a delicious meal featuring the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand, and the evening’s festivities were led by world-renowned recording artist, songwriter, and television and music producer Perla Baccus.

Speakers included National Angus Board (NAB) Chairman, Madison Butler, Vancouver, Ind.; NAB Foundation Director Curtis Cowley, Rockfield, Ky.; and Angus Foundation Board Chairman John Giblin, Stillwater, Okla.

“I think the Angus Foundation has done a great job of using their assets to benefit multiple aspects of the Angus breed,” Giblin said. “The Angus breed is the future of the beef industry — and it’s future starts here.”

**Investors in Angus’ future:** The Angus Foundation welcomed the news of a kind amount, “The Past Leads Us to Our Future” by artist Chad “C.J.” Smith, Underwood, Ill. The book sold for \$20,000 went to Brian and Evelyn Hill, Sugar B Ranch, Warsaw, Ill. The funds will benefit the Angus Foundation’s

