

OPEN INVITATION



2019 CAB Ambassador Award winners Steve and Ginger Olson feel blessed to share production agriculture's story.

Welcoming guests to the table at home or afar, the Olsons earn CAB brand's 2019 Ambassador Award.

Story & photos by Abbie Burnett, Certified Angus Beef LLC

You may not notice when it is set for four, but the custom-made heritage table in Steve and Ginger Olson's dining room expands to seat 24. The Olsons had it built because it's important that everyone in their family gets a seat at the table — no side room for their seven grandsons.

If they could sit everyone at the same table when guests come to tour Olson Land & Cattle near Hereford, Texas, they absolutely would. For nearly 30 years, the family has hosted ranch tours for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand.

Every time, people find the Olson hospitality a quiet comfort and gentle service. They intermingle with chefs and distributors, answering questions about ranching and how cattle are raised, making each person just as welcome as if they were back in Texas gathered around that table.

These are some of the reasons

the Olsons received the 2019 CAB Ambassador Award.

More than education

Ranch days for CAB means sharing the gate in "gate to plate." Guests gather in the barn for a brand overview, then split up and start rotations out to the pastures, learning from every family member they encounter.

Steve, a member of the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, will cite four points: animal welfare, protecting the land, caring for the people and profitability to keep it all going.

"I think the cattle industry

is sustainable in every aspect, but I also believe that we have that responsibility to share with others," he says. "It's other people being inquisitive about where their food comes from, and if we don't fulfill that need, they will find answers from others who maybe don't know all of the truth about cattle production."

Steve addresses consumer concerns, holding up a 100-cc bottle of an antibiotic and quoting the \$450 price.

"That statement alone will get some wide eyes across the room," he says. It soon becomes clear ranchers don't use antibiotics without good reason. He tells how they keep most cattle healthy with regular vaccinations.

Son-in-law Scott Pohlman walks the chefs through cattle handling, husbandry and what they eat while daughter-in-law Kristi might demonstrate artificial

insemination (AI) and embryo transfers (ET). When they gather back together, the Olsons' grandsons have their show heifers set up, demonstrating the next generation of ranchers.

Through each phase, the Olson family has a way of bringing complicated concepts to common understanding.

Scott relates calf weaning to sending your kids to their first day of kindergarten. It's hard at first, there might even be some crying, but at the end of the day everyone's happy.

Through all the conversations on care, health and challenges of raising Angus cattle, Ginger and daughters are there to provide the "Southern Hospitality" worthy of capital letters.

Going beyond the call

What makes the Olsons stand out as ambassadors, says CAB's Deanna Walenciak, is their "absolute willingness to help out whenever they can." There was the time they worked cattle on an early July morning for a photo shoot because, "They knew it would help us tell the story."

At the brand's 30th anniversary party, Steve and Ginger flew in on short notice to interact with chefs and distributors. Walenciak watched them connect: "They brought a little bit of Texas right into New York City."

Steve was elected to the American Angus Association Board of Directors in 2006, to the CAB Board in 2007 and served two years as chairman. In 2015, he was elected Association president.

All three Olson children were on the National Junior Angus Association Board, and both daughters wore red jackets as Miss American Angus. In college, eldest daughter Moriah and future husband, Scott, worked as CAB interns.

Steve says, "Ginger and I feel blessed every day that God has given us this path." |

Editor's note: Abbie Burnett is a producer communications specialist for CAB.