

Open Gates

New York farm wins inaugural CAB Ambassador Award.

Story by
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Most cattlemen don't find themselves displaying bulls in the parking lot of a suburban grocery store or hosting meat cutters in their pastures, but that's become as routine to Phil Trowbridge and his son, PJ, as breeding cows or clipping sale bulls.

"Any time we call Phil, and ask for anything — and we ask for some crazy things — he's always game," says Deanna Walenciak, *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand marketing director.

Trowbridge Angus Farms received the inaugural CAB Ambassador Award for a continual willingness to go above and beyond when hosting groups and representing the brand.

Phil and Annie Trowbridge traveled to the CAB annual conference Sept. 24-26 in



San Antonio, Texas. There they accepted the award on behalf of the family, which includes daughter-in-law Miranda (PJ's wife) and the couple's two daughters; as well as daughter and son-in-law Amy and Michael Alix and their two children.

"It's not like we're stopping by with two people to have a cup of coffee," Walenciak says. "We're bringing 100 meat cutters from Price Chopper grocery store, and we're stopping by for six hours. You've got to be up for the challenge."

They always are.

Always ready

The neatly manicured farm sits nestled among eastern New York's rolling hills.

The small pastures where 250 registered cows graze are sprinkled between wooded areas that reveal their true beauty each autumn, along with many "country homes" that city dwellers flock to each weekend. The Catskill Mountain range sits off in the distance.

"We really need virtually no notice. We're kind of ready all the time. That's just our mentality," says Trowbridge. It's not so much about keeping up the picturesque scenery as it is just part of an overarching philosophy.

"We're committed to quality, no matter what we do," he says. "We have horses, we have dogs, we have cattle, we have grandkids; whatever we do, we really concentrate on having quality experiences."

In addition to hosting CAB groups,

Trowbridge offers an internship program and opens his doors to college classes, to National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) guests and to many others.

"It's become something we look forward to," he says, noting he learns from the visitors, as well. "It's helped us a lot on how to know the ins and outs of how the whole system works."

Rural-urban connection

The cattleman has a little bit of a home-court advantage when it comes to connecting with consumers, because his rural setting is becoming more urban all the time.

"There are 20 or 30 neighbors who adjoin our farms that are second-home owners. They come up Friday night and leave Monday morning," he says, noting that his family is always cognizant that those residents come for the quiet. "We don't wean calves on weekends or we don't drive through their driveway, we find another way in and out."

Trowbridge takes the same care with his land and livestock, and hopes he is passing that lesson on to his children and grandchildren.

"I can't impress on them enough that I want them to take responsibility for what they're doing, and I want them to feel very proud of what they've accomplished," he says.

Scott Yelle, vice president of merchandising and marketing for Sysco Connecticut, brought his entire sales force to the Trowbridge farm for a training last summer. He says that mind-set was evident, and carried through to the 75 or more attendees.

"It gives them some emotion tied to the story, feeling like, 'Wow, I see where this is coming from,'" Yelle says. "We don't always get to see the product; we sell the box. This gives them confidence in selling CAB and real sense of ownership and pride."

Connecting with an Angus producer gave the brand a face, and that's motivating, he says. "Phil is a great story teller, and people just gravitated toward him."



When people leave the farm, they have their own stories of seeing a farm firsthand. Some are told in restaurant kitchens as a salesperson closes the deal, and others are told from behind a meat counter as an urban mom tries to make a supper selection.

Still others make their way to the pages that millions will read.

On two separate occasions, Trowbridge hosted food journalists who write for publications such as *The New York Times* and *Bon Appetit*.

One reporter made an impression with her first impression.

"She was an extremely well-educated, knowledgeable person, but when she saw cattle on green grass she was like in shock: 'Do they do this often?'" Trowbridge says, noting the wakeup call was mutual. "I didn't realize that there were some people that just assumed cattle were in a feedlot all the time."

It's moments like these that inspire Trowbridge to keep opening up the farm gates.

"There's nothing I'd like better than to bring every consumer to the farm," the cattleman says.

Each year, one-by-one, he's getting a little closer to that than most ever will.



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Editor's Note: Miranda Reiman is assistant director of industry information for Certified Angus Beef LLC.