KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY ANIMAL SCIENCES AND INDUSTRY

Family & Friends Reunion

OCTOBER 15, 2021 | STANLEY STOUT CENTER | MANHATTAN, KS
TOGETHER AGAIN

After a whirlwind of a year, the alumni and friends of Kansas State University Animal Sciences and Industry (ASI) reunited once again to celebrate the accomplishments of the department, as well as reconnect with colleagues and friends at the annual K-State ASI Family & Friends Reunion.

More than 1,000 attendees joined together at the Stanley Stout Center on Oct. 15, 2021, in Manhattan, Kansas. The annual event is hosted by the Livestock and Meat Industry Council, Inc (LMIC) in cooperation with the ASI department.

This publication is dedicated to showcase the memories made and the special moments shared by attendees at this year’s event. Alongside coverage of the event, highlighted in this publication is the 2021 Don L. Good Impact Award Winner, U.S. Premium Beef, as well as ASI department highlights and updates.

Sincerely,
Family & Friends Publication Editors
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2 FAMILY & FRIENDS REUNION
The consumer-based beef marketing company was recognized as the 2021 Don L. Good Impact Award Winner.

STORY BY: FAYE SMITH
Value-based marketing in the beef industry can be described as finding the products and characteristics that are valuable to your consumer and paying producers to hit those targets. This idea led to the creation of U.S. Premium Beef (USPB), the 2021 Don L. Good Impact Award winner. USPB is a producer-owned processing company dedicated to the profitability of producers and creating high-quality beef products for today’s consumers.

BEHIND THE BUSINESS
In the mid-1990s, the beef industry was going through a phase when demand for beef products was shrinking and profitability for producers was dropping. There were growing concerns among producers whether it was worth staying in the business. That is, until a group of 21 beef producers met to voice their concerns about the industry and decide where they needed to step in to figure out how to better market finished cattle.

“The motivation for USPB in the first place was that a lot of producers were concerned about the direction the finished cattle industry was heading. It was a time in the mid to late-1990s when the opportunities to purchase high-quality beef products at retail was limited due to the types of products being produced,” says Tracy Thomas, USPB vice president of marketing.

USPB founders believed that to be able to efficiently market finished cattle, they needed to have market access on a timely basis, be able to sell on a quality-based grid, have access to carcass data, and also ownership in beef processing.

“It’s like a lot of things,” says Mark Gardiner, USPB Board of Directors chairman, about the creation of USPB. “It was out of a need, and we wanted to put more skin in the game, and have more understanding and ownership of what made money in the beef business. In all reality, the beef business wasn’t very good at that time. Our market share was dropping, our prices were poor and our product was poor. So at that time, I was 35 years of age, had twin boys that were 3 years of age, and we were scared, and we needed to do better. So we came together to build a system that rewarded quality by paying for that value.”

In addition to the marketing system they developed, USPB developed a consumer-focused pricing grid to incentivize its producers to deliver higher quality carcasses. These premiums were able to support producers with their investment into their own genetics and give them more opportunity to make money on their cattle.

“Their reputation in the industry is excellent, very well perceived by the producers,” says Steven Mangan, Livestock and Meat Industry Council, Inc (LMIC) Award committee chair. “I think that the foundation they’ve laid out gives the cow-calf people and the producers the opportunity to receive premiums from the genetics and what they’ve poured their life in to improve the quality of their product.”

USPB was organized in July 1996 and began a partnership with an existing processor, Farmland National Beef Packing Company (FNBP). What makes USPB unique is the ability for producers to take ownership positions in the company.

“We did round up several producers with like-minded goals and objectives who were doing the right things, but were limited in their ability to market their finished cattle for anything other than a commodity price,” Thomas adds. “Having an ownership position in beef processing was a key ingredient in our initial objectives.”

INNOVATION & SUCCESS
Today, USPB is a 15% owner of National Beef Packing Company (NBP). The initial objectives of ownership, marketing on a value-based grid, receiving carcass data and market access are as important today as they were in 1997. Since December 2, 1997, USPB has processed more than 16.6 million head of cattle from 2,900 producers in 38 states and distributed grid premiums of more than $605 million during the life of the program. Through grid premiums and distributions to the ownership base over the life of the program, USPB has paid back $2.1 billion to its members. For producer-members across the country, USPB has given them the ability to gain much larger access to grow their businesses.

“My family or any other families would not have been able to make it without USPB,
let alone grow our business and have other family members join into the business,” Gardiner says. “Oftentimes a lot of folks think that USPB has one of the bigger stakeholders, but it also has market access to many families and smaller operations that have that access to National Beef.”

Not only have USPB members been able to increase their carcass premiums, but USPB cattle have recently averaged in the mid 80%'s (percentage wise) Choice or higher carcass grading. They have also been able to capitalize in helping producers send cattle that will work for NBP’s branded products such as USDA Choice, Prime, Certified Angus Beef® and a multitude of others.

“I think, professionally, I feel the best about what we did at U.S. Premium Beef because I spent my career prior to that writing articles about people who were doing new things in the beef industry and trying to make the beef industry better either on their own operations or for the industry as a whole,” says Bill Miller, LMIC vice president and former USPB director of communications. “But U.S. Premium Beef, wow, that gave me a chance to be innovative and efficient and that’s the USPB way. We’re just going to have to get better each day with what we do and keep moving the bar higher.” Thomas adds.

**K-STATE CONNECTIONS**

USPB’s relationship with K-State has been strong since the company’s beginning. Many of the founding members were Animal Sciences and Industry graduates, as well as many who are still involved with USPB. One person who was supportive of USPB from the beginning — Dr. Don Good.

“Dr. Good was at one of our very first meetings and advised us through the early days,” Gardiner recalls. “I can remember him telling us, ‘Keep it pure boys, keep it pure. If you do this right, you will change the beef industry.’”

Gardiner adds that K-State relationships made a large impact on the creation of USPB. “There isn’t anything more of a Kansas State business than USPB. It was created from relationships made 38 years ago at Kansas State. I tell students, you want to learn all these things but the most important thing you need to do is know the person to your right and left and your professors; that relationship matrix is the key to your life. That’s why USPB has been so successful.”

USPB staff recognize the importance of working with K-State faculty members to serve their producer members. “K-State had experts who could help producers interpret the data for their own operation and make suggestions for improvements,” Thomas explains. “It was truly a great match for the Kansas beef industry, and producers from many other states as well.”

Thomas credits receiving the Don L. Good Impact Award to the work that many producers have done to make USPB what it is today.

“We were thrilled to find out that we were nominated,” Thomas says. “It is a testament to all the men and women in the state of Kansas, many of them department of ASI grads, who worked so hard to put the company together and make it what it is today. On behalf of all of them, we are humbled and thrilled beyond belief to have our name mentioned in the same sentence as an award named after Dr. Don Good. We’d like to say thank you to all those responsible for presenting us this award.”
fun for all ages.

The Junior Wildcat Barnyard is the central location for future Wildcats during the K-State ASI Family & Friends Reunion. Kids of all ages enjoy face painting, coloring, life-size rocking horses, rope making and playing in the dirt with farm toys. Before the sun set, a group of youth played a few snaps of football on the small field outside the Stanley Stout Center. Around the event grounds a small tractor pulled trainloads of youth throughout the evening. The following pages showcase the laughs, smiles and experiences our future alumni enjoyed during the event.

“Really be passionate about what you do,” Miller says about his many interests. “If it’s just a job that you have to go to work at every day, then find something better, something you’re more passionate about, because life’s too short to go through it just doing a job.”

Miller is a household name within beef publishing and agricultural communications. He’s served in various leadership positions with publications like *Beef Today*, *Farm Journal* and *Successful Farming*.

“I’ve been so fortunate in my career to be involved in a number of startups, some of which have been pretty successful,” Miller says. “When I think about my career, I was just really, really lucky to be at the right place at the right time to get to be a part of forming these new ventures.”

The retired vice president of communications for U.S. Premium Beef, Miller is proud of his work to better the beef industry.

“When we started U.S. Premium Beef, the industry was producing less than 50 percent Choice grading carcasses,” Miller says. “Today, most cattle grade between 80 and 90 percent Choice. Producers have upgraded their genetics and management skills to deliver what consumers want. I’m confident that U.S. Premium Beef played an important role in the beef industry making those changes. That’s what it’s all about.”

Miller was born into agriculture and has spent most of his life immersed in it. He grew up on a farm in western Kansas and now runs a commercial cow herd with his family on their Flint Hills ranch.
“Everything I’ve done has been involved in agriculture in one way or another, whether that’s volunteering, or actually running a ranch and raising cattle,” Miller says. “Agriculture is an important profession. Farmers and ranchers produce food for people. That’s as absolutely necessary as any profession so it’s important that we make the food we produce as healthy and wholesome as possible.”

**REUNION HOST**

Miller has been involved with the K-State Animal Sciences and Industry Family & Friends Reunion since its inception.

“Our primary goal was to bring people back to the Animal Sciences department at Kansas State to renew acquaintances with their professors and former classmates without any requests for fundraising,” Miller says. “I thought that was really important.”

Miller isn’t a K-State ASI graduate. He majored in wildlife biology and journalism before starting his career as an agricultural communicator. But K-State ASI is near and dear to Miller’s heart. He says the late Miles McKee, K-State ASI professor emeritus, took him under his wing when he was a student even though Miller wasn’t majoring in an Animal Sciences curriculum. Additionally, one of his first jobs right out of college was working as an extension information specialist for K-State ASI from 1976 to 1977.

“Seeing people smile and laugh and slap each other on the back and give hugs and say, ‘Wow, it’s great to see you again. I haven’t seen you for years,’” Miller says is why he has devoted time helping with the annual reunion. “The first year we started it was really neat, because some of the old timers like Miles McKee and others of that generation were there and I remember, their faces would just light up when they would see their former students. That was so rewarding to watch.”

In addition to helping plan and host the annual ASI Family & Friends Reunion, Bill proposed the idea for the class that creates a post-event publication and assists with planning and covering of the annual event.

“Bill has been on the ASI Family & Friends Reunion committee since the beginning, and student involvement was always a very important aspect,” says Angie Denton, ASI communications coordinator. “He proposed the publication idea to the K-State Livestock and Meat Industry Council, Inc (LMIC) board. It was really his idea to develop the class that would produce a publication. He’s been a very big supporter of the class.”

**A LEADER**

Miller serves on the LMIC board and is the current vice president. He’s a member of the Morris County Hospital Board and Frontier Farm Credit Board. He also helped start a mentoring program at his local high school. Improving the lives of others through service and volunteer work is what Miller loves to do.

“If you see somebody in need, help them,” Miller says. “If you don’t have an individual in mind, then help the food bank or the animal shelter or whatever it is that’s important to you. You’re doing some good for someone else. That’s what being a servant is to me. It’s just helping others however you can help them. Sometimes it’s just having a conversation.”

Family is one of the most important parts of Miller’s life. Bill and his wife, Debbie, met at K-State and have been married for 43 years and have two daughters — Anna and Christina.

“Debbie taught me the value of taking time off and recharging, getting things balanced and refocused,” Miller says. “I needed that. That was influential to me, along with the value of meeting the needs of our kids, first and foremost. She’s wonderful that way.”

Family has been an integral part of Miller’s success, from finding jobs he loves to chasing his dreams. His family has been by his side and extremely supportive the entire time.

“I think the girls and Debbie made a lot of sacrifices for me to be on the road so much, traveling all the time, but I could not have done that without their support and their blessing,” Miller says.

“I’ve been so fortunate in my career to get to be a part of ventures that made a difference in the industry,” Miller adds.
EVENT

FAMILY & FRIENDS REUNION
Members of the K-State Animal Sciences and Industry family enjoyed a fun-filled evening being together again during the 2021 K-State ASI Family & Friends Reunion. The event was hosted Friday, October 15 at the Stanley Stout Center. The following photo story captures just a few who were able to be at the 2021 event.
With more than 20,000 students enrolled at Kansas State University, finding a place of community and purpose is a priority for a majority of students.

Abbey Schiefelbein, food science and industry (FDSCI) senior, felt a place of belonging when she initially toured K-State. These feelings only increased when she visited with FDSCI faculty.

“The professors I talked to were super excited that I was touring,” Schiefelbein says. “I’m nine hours away from home, and I wanted to know that I was going somewhere where they actually care about me, and I’m not just a number.”

The FDSCI program has a 10:1 student-to-faculty ratio. The major also has the Food Science Club and Product Development Club where students can connect with peers, food science professionals and participate in different competition teams.

“At food science club meetings, you get to see the different companies that hire food scientists, and they talk about what they actually do in the industry,” Schiefelbein says.

Schiefelbein currently serves as the president of the Food Science Club. She has also participated in both the food science quiz bowl and product development competition teams. “The Institute of Food Technologists releases different scenarios, and the one that my team worked on was to create a product that was a healthy snack and shelf stable,” she says. “You have to write a proposal of why your product is different from anything else on the market.”

The proposals then go to different company sponsors for the competitions.
“Disney and Ocean Spray used to sponsor different competitions in places like San Diego,” says Abbey Nutsch, food science teaching associate professor. Nutsch also serves as the FDSCI undergraduate teaching coordinator.

These different extracurricular activities help students explore the different options in food sciences. “In the food science major, we have two options: the science option and the business option,” Nutsch says.

The different pathways allow for students to pursue different minors of interest. “For the business pathway students can minor in either business or ag business,” Nutsch says. “We really encourage the students to get minors since they’re taking the classes anyways.”

Schiefelbein is receiving her minor in business and has a secondary major in global food systems leadership and a meat science certificate.

“I got hooked on meat sciences,” Schiefelbein says. “You can really go more in depth on a certain area. My certificate and secondary major kept me interested in food science because they reminded me that not everything is about research and development.”

Food science is a vast industry where different strengths and interests are able to excel. “An example I always give is when I say the word fireman, you immediately can picture what a fireman looks like and the equipment they use,” Nutsch says. “However, when I say food scientist, there isn’t just one prototypical example of what a food scientist does.”

Nutsch explained that more creative students tend to gravitate toward product development and marketing and more analytical students prefer the lab work of research and food safety. Other areas of food sciences include food processing and quality control.

“If we line up 20 of our alumni, their business cards could all have 20 different titles,” she says.

No matter what area a food science student may go into, food science majors have nearly a 100% job placement rate upon graduation. Along with high job placement, food science majors can expect one of the highest starting salaries among College of Agriculture graduates. The starting salaries are also in the top 20 across the K-State campus.

“We don’t graduate enough students to fill all the demand,” Nutsch says. “Companies are trying to fill twice as many positions as there are food science graduates.”

However, if you are like Schiefelbein, a food science masters is the best next step following graduation. K-State started with only a master’s degree in food science in the 1960s as an interdepartmental program. Then in the 1970s, the bachelor’s program was established.

In 2001, the online option for both the graduate and undergraduate degrees became available. “Our online graduate program is really focused on working professionals who work in the food industry but don’t necessarily have an undergraduate degree in food science,” Nutsch says.

Despite whatever path students decide to take, they enjoy the highly applicable side to the science. This can be through creating a new flavor of potato chip, to innovations in food processing systems, to discovering new ways to discover foodborne pathogens.

“Everybody eats, so your job is relevant to literally everyone,” Schiefelbein says. “You’re not ever going to be applying something that doesn’t matter. You’re going to be impactful to literally everyone’s lives.”
Excellent food is the basis of every great event. Event planners and sponsors are always looking to offer new food or drink options for reunion attendees to enjoy. New in 2021 were cheese curds sponsored by Alma Creamery.
Undergraduate and graduate students are the backbone of the K-State ASI Family & Friends Reunion. From student employees to ASI club members to members of the ASI communications and event planning class, this annual event would not be possible without the help of the talented ASI students. These images highlight some of the undergraduate and graduate students who help make the event possible.
A K-State ASI Family & Friends Reunion tradition is excellent music. A highlight each year is the performance by the K-State Pride of Wildcat Land Marching Band. For the second time, the Too Many Degrees band, including KSU ASI Professor David Grieger, entertained the crowd. Here’s a collection of images featuring the musicians who made this year’s event so special.
Drs. Kelly and Marcie Lechtenberg are proud supporters of K-State’s missions. The family’s passion for K-State began when Kelly entered veterinary school in 1983 while Marcie was teaching at Riley County High School. Marcie earned her master’s while Kelly completed his veterinary training. Cooperation between the Colleges of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine allowed Kelly to complete simultaneous DVM and PhD programs.

Kelly’s educational background was critical to founding companies in Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa that provide research services focused on the development and regulatory approval of safe, efficacious products for food producing animals. Marcie serves as the clinical director for the Couple and Family Therapy program in the College of Health and Human Sciences.

Although not native to Kansas, the Lechtenberg daughters and their husbands are all K-Staters. Jana Biery is a guidance counselor in the Manhattan High School system. Her husband, Drew, is the owner of The Barn Baseball Academy. Drs. Brooke and Charley Cull both serve as vice presidents and research scientists from their home in Oakland, Neb. Youngest daughter, Dr. Paige Andersen, opened TimberCreek Veterinary Hospital on the east side of Manhattan in 2016. Paige’s husband, Max, owns Andersen Farrier Service as a Journeyman Farrier. The Lechtenberg family holds 18 K-State degrees. More will likely follow, as four grandsons (Jackson, Carter, Cannon & Mason) and two granddaughters (Madeline & Emily) can all be seen wearing a lot of purple.

The Lechtenbergs are members of the KSU Foundation Board of Trustees, where Kelly serves on the Board. He is also a LMIC Royal Board member. The Lechtenberg family are founding and continuous supporters of the Family & Friends Reunion to honor the purple magic of the K-State experience, which can help foster lifelong relationships through the power of mentorship, education and friendship that makes all of us part of the K-State family. The Lechtenberg Family was recognized as the 2020 Don L. Good Impact Award Winner for their dedication to K-State and animal agriculture.
Richard Porter owns and operates a grazing and backgrounding operation located approximately 60 miles southeast of Manhattan, Kan. He receives around 8,000 head of three-weight, high-risk calves annually and grows them out to eight-weights. For most of the year, the cattle are on native grass supplemented with distillers grains. By mid-winter, the calves are in a drylot receiving corn silage.

Known for being an independent thinker, Richard has two degrees from Kansas State University — Chemical Engineering and Master of Agribusiness (MAB). He also holds a law degree. Richard has participated in numerous cattle research trials with the K-State Animal Sciences and Industry (ASI) department and is a proud member of the LMIC Board of Directors.

A staunch supporter of the K-State ASI department, Richard generously served as the lead donor for the Stanley Stout Marketing Center construction project. The Stanley Stout Center is currently used for a multitude of purposes, including serving as the venue for the K-State ASI Family & Friends Reunion.

Richard has three children and five grandchildren.

Dan and Beth Bird are no strangers to Kansas State University, and their legacy of philanthropic support, leadership, and service in so many different colleges and programs is impressive. Dan received his degree in animal husbandry from K-State in 1962. Beth earned her degree in business administration from K-State in 1961.

The couple resides in Manhattan, Kan., where Dan is a part owner in Pratt Feeders, Ashland Feeders and Buffalo Feeders. Beth is enjoying retirement.

Dan has served as past member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors. Dan and Beth are lifetime members of the Alumni Association and members of the Beach Museum Board of Visitors, which Beth is past chair. They are members of the Manhattan Catbackers. Beth served on the board for Hale Library, and both Dan and Beth served on the College of Agriculture’s Innovation and Inspiration Campaign steering committee. They are also supporters of K-State Athletics, the K-State Gardens and McCain Auditorium building projects. The couple has supported the K-State ASI Family & Friends Reunion the past two years.

Since Dan’s first gift of $10 in 1964, Dan and Beth have established five named funds and scholarships in the colleges of Agriculture and Business Administration, and across K-State. In 2018 the couple was awarded the K-State Medal of Excellence, which recognizes those who have advanced K-State through exceptional service, leadership and philanthropic contributions.

The couple celebrated their 60th anniversary on August 20, 2021. They have two children and two grandchildren.
Nestled in the Flint Hills and just a few miles to the west of the Kansas State University campus, the K-State Beef Stocker Unit is a place for research, along with educating both producers and students. The unit has 40 receiving pens for up to 500 head of 500-lb. calves, along with 1,220 acres of pasture and prairie. The K-State Beef Stocker Unit land was purchased in 1948 by the department. The acreage was home to the K-State Animal Sciences Range until the unit was repurposed in 2004. The unit’s mission is to focus on issues that are of current importance to beef producers involved in the backgrounding and stocker segments. The annual KSU Beef Stocker Field Day is hosted at the Stocker Unit.
The Kansas Artificial Breeding Service Unit, also known as KABSU, was the brainchild of F.W. Atkeson, a professor and K-State Dairy Department head from 1935-1958. In 1949, the Kansas legislature appropriated $35,000 and another $10,000 was added by the university’s College of Agriculture to establish KABSU.

For years, the unit was located on a highly visible site at the corner of College and Claflin Avenues in Manhattan. When that property was sold in 2001, the unit was moved to its present location northeast of campus on Tuttle Creek Blvd.

KABSU provides bovine reproductive technologies, continuing education and research-based information to facilitate genetic improvement of cattle through artificial insemination. The unit collects, extends, processes, freezes and sells bull semen. Other services provided include sales of AI supplies, breeding soundness exams for bulls to be sold and consultation services.

KABSU’s motto of service is “Better cattle for better living!”
The Swine Nutrition Lab first opened on May 18, 1988, and is housed in Weber 206. The lab consists of 2,500 square feet of space with a 300-square-foot research cooler. Current projects include research over feeding omega-3 fatty acids. The lab is also assessing the bone and skeletal health of pigs fed varying levels of different nutrients like phosphorus and the enzyme phytase.
The Food Safety and Defense Lab is located in Call 231 and 232. Dr. Randall Phebus, professor of food science, started the lab in 1992 when an E. coli outbreak in beef emerged. The lab focuses on intervention studies in food safety, and its research is able to be highly applied to industry practices. The mission of the Food Safety and Defense Lab is to provide knowledge and tools for the food manufacturing sector to utilize, thus promoting and ensuring public health.
The Meat Cookery and Sensory Lab is housed in Weber 107. This lab is home to meat research using sensory evaluation and mechanical tenderness to discover what consumers want from their meat products.

Current research is evaluating the effect of bone-in versus boneless cuts and their eating quality, which studies the resurgence of bone-in products; and whether or not the consumer can find higher quality characteristics in bone-in versus boneless. In addition, they will research if marbling plus the bone-in component matter to the consumer.
meat chemistry
and muscle biology

The Muscle Biology Lab focuses on researching animal growth efficiency. By learning how the animal is converting feed into muscle, this lab is used to investigate the metabolism of the skeletal muscle and how it is regulated.

The Meat Chemistry Lab is located in Weber 201. One of the current projects is looking at how the aging of meat will affect connective tissue in lower quality beef cuts, as well as utilizing egg yolk antibodies to extend the shelf life of meat products.
Dr. Karol Fike  
2021 Mark and Eva Gardiner Innovation and Excellence Faculty Award  
K-State Professor of the Week

Dr. Bob Goodband  
American Society of Animal Science Fellow Award for Extension

Dr. Joann Kouba  
K-State Charlie Award for September

Dr. A.J Tarpoff  
Midwest ASAS Outstanding Young Extension Specialist Award  
KSRE 2021 Outstanding Regional or State Extension Professional Award

Dr. Mike Tokach  
FASS-AFIA New Frontiers in Animal Nutrition Award  
Dr. Ron and Rae Inman Outstanding Faculty Award for Research

Achilles Vieira-Neto  
University of Florida Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences Award of Excellence for Graduate Research  
Best Dissertation in Agricultural Systems and Overall Best Dissertation  
American Dairy Science Association Richard M. Hoyt Award

Patricia Ochonski  
Larry R. Corah Outstanding PhD Student

Zach Duncan  
Larry R. Corah Outstanding Masters Student

Katie Lybarger  
K-State ASI Outstanding Senior
Thank you to this group of outstanding students who helped with the photography and writing in this publication. The class was sponsored by the LMIC Board.

Pictured (l to r) are: Grace Jacobson; Grace Aust, photo editor; Sydnee Shive, video editor; Faye Smith, managing editor; and Amelia Schatz, social media editor.

Save the DATE SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8 2022 KSU ASI FAMILY & FRIENDS REUNION