



# AGZONE

NEWS & UPDATES FROM THE SOUTH FLORIDA FAIR

## IN THIS EDITION:

- Meet your PBC 4-H Agents.....Page 2
- 4-H at the South Florida Fair.....Page 3
- Meet our Ag Committee Chair.....Page 3
- Meet our Sponsor.....Page 4
- Did You Know?.....Page 4
- Meet the Lettelier Sisters.....Page 5

*Premium Book available on-line*

## WHAT ARE YOU ENTERING AT THE 2021 SOUTH FLORIDA FAIR?

By the end of this month, we'll be just shy of 140 days until the start of the 2021 South Florida Fair, and we couldn't be more excited to see what you're planning to exhibit and show at the January 15-31 event!

The 2021 Official Premium Book is now posted on-line with all the Fair's competitive exhibit class offerings, including livestock, small animals, and indoor exhibits. Respective project record books are also on the Fair's website.

"It's always an exciting time when the Fair begins receiving the entry forms to various shows and special exhibits," said President/CEO Vicki Chouris. "That's when our adrenaline really gets pumped because we're excited about all of the many and varied exhibits that our community is entering at the Fair. Agriculture is the backbone of this Fair, and we couldn't be prouder of the exhibitors who work hard all year-long to raise, feed and care for the animals to be judged here.

"Our youth exhibitors are really the pride and joy of the South Florida Fair," Chouris continued, "because they offer the hope and spirit that agriculture remains strong and viable in our community."

In the coming weeks, more competition information will be posted to the Premium Book, including equestrian and youth judging contests. You can find the Premium Book at [southfloridafair.com/premiumbook](http://southfloridafair.com/premiumbook).

*Continued on Page 2*

## In a safe and socially distanced platform AN EARTHLY A-FAIR... IT WILL BE DIFFERENT

There is no question that the 2021 South Florida Fair will look and feel different, with respect to COVID-19, and the social distancing and associated requirements.

"We are hopeful and are planning for a full Fair in 2021," said President/CEO Vicki Chouris. "In the event that we must scale back, our Fair will be a safe event, encompassing all of the practices and safeguards that we know have to be in place. Our facility re-opened for events in July and events are slated through the Fall. To date, everything has gone very smoothly."

The Fairgrounds is canvassed with handwashing stations, hand sanitizers, signage about hand-



washing and mask wearing practices. Restrooms are cleaned and high traffic areas are routinely cleaned and disinfected.

"The Fair is doing everything we can to eliminate touchpoints such as at ticket booths," Chouris added.

In the livestock areas, precautionary measures are being put into place to ensure exhibitor social distancing. "That's hard to do when there's a lot of exhibitors in a gathering point at one time when preparing and showing their animals," she said.

*Continued on Page 2*

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Livestock exhibitors are encouraged to review all project-related sections of the Premium Book and be aware of project deadlines, particularly for the market steers and hogs.

### MARKET STEER AND HOG IMPORTANT DATES/WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

**Hog and Market Steer Project (Self ear tagging) important dates:**

Starting **October 1, 2020**, all South Florida Fair market animal project ear tags will be mailed. Exhibitors must complete the online entry to request ear tag(s).

On **October 24, 2020**, from 8-10 a.m., exhibitors can bring market animal projects to the Fairgrounds for ear tag placement. For the on-site tag-in,

- Must be able to handle animal(s).
- Steers must be led into a squeeze chute.
- For safety and animal health reasons, hogs will only be tagged without personnel entering the inside hog transportation units i.e. trailers, pop pers. Exhibitors or helpers must be able to direct

the animal to the person tagging from outside the trailer.

For the 2021 South Florida Fair, market animal exhibitors must:

- By **October 26, 2020** upload all required documents or face project disqualification. Exhibitors may combine all required documents into one (1) PDF.
  - Entry updates must include ear tag photos upon receipt of the tags.
  - Submit required documents including:
    - Two (2) photos of the animal project(s) – both sides of animal (show the ear tag and exhibitor in these photos)
    - Send an additional photo(s) to meet the requirements.
- Provide GPA letter verifying 2.0 GPA or higher.
- Submit the market auction sample buyer and sample Thank You letters.
- Provide the market auction buyer list, containing at least five buyer names and complete addresses.

*Continued on Page 2*



## MEET YOUR PALM BEACH COUNTY 4-H AGENTS

Noelle Guay and Daniel Gonzalez serve as your Palm Beach County 4-H Extension Agents. Along with the rest of the Palm Beach County 4-H team comprised of Maivette Hernandez-Lorenzo, Carmen Bostrom, and Dina Ligo-tino, they strive to provide meaningful hands-on learning experiences and youth development opportunities to the Palm Beach County community. In order to better serve the entirety of Palm Beach County, Noelle leads the 4-H effort east of State Road 7, while Daniel leads the 4-H effort west of State Road 7. Learn more about Noelle and Daniel, and how to contact them, below!

### **Noelle Guay**

Noelle Guay has been with Palm Beach County 4-H since 2015. She has a Master's degree in Biological Sciences from Florida Atlantic University and focuses on STEM, healthy living, and diversity and inclusion programs within 4-H. Noelle's Master's work focused on marine zooplankton ecology and she has taken her passion for the ocean and developed Palm Beach County 4-H's marine science camp, which includes shark tagging and coral reef biology. Prior



to 4-H, Noelle worked in Washington DC for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ). Noelle currently resides in West Palm Beach with her husband, Mike, their two dogs, and their cat.

### **Daniel Gonzalez**

Daniel Gonzalez has been with Palm Beach County 4-H since 2019. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Criminology from the University of Florida, and is beginning his Master's coursework in the Fall studying Family, Youth, and Community Sciences. Providing community youth development resources, programming, and activities designed to teach critical life skills, Daniel's goal is to assist in the fostering of meaningful knowledge gain and behavior change in the lives of youth and trusting adults. Prior to 4-H, Daniel worked for the University of Florida Police Department, and began his career with the UF/IFAS Extension working for the Family Nutrition Program (FNP).



*Continued on Page 3*

### **PREMIUM BOOK**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

Please be sure to read all rules and regulations within the departments that are being entered.

Some reminders and new information for the Fair are:

- October 24: 8 - 10 a.m.: Hog and Steer tagging at the South Florida Fairgrounds
- November 7: 9 a.m. - Noon: Ethics Training at the South Florida Fairgrounds
- November 21: Cattle barn construction and Mooternity setup
- Entries close December 1 for paper entries. On-line submissions have an extended deadline of midnight December 13
- December 5: Hog and arena construction
- December 12: Small animal tents and horse arena
- January 9: Cleanup and finishing work throughout all areas
- All Angus Shows are Blow & Go
- Purple papered LIM-Flex animals that are 60 percent Limousin or better are accepted
- Poultry Best Decorated Floor Competition is back

### **AN EARTHLY A-FAIR...IT WILL BE DIFFERENT**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

"We're constantly watching what other fairs across the country are doing to have quality and successful livestock shows and market auctions during the pandemic," Chouris added. "Other Fairs are being successful, and we will be too! At the very least, we will have a Fair agriculturally."

South Florida Fair officials are planning various scenarios for the 2021 Fair. "It could be that some of our programming may have to be offered virtually, or a combination of on-site/virtual. Either way, we will be ready to open our gates to our livestock exhibitors," she said.

Historically, the South Florida Fair encompasses nearly 500 exhibitors, showing some 4000 head of cattle, goats, hogs, horses, and small animals.

### **IMPORTANT DEADLINES**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

#### **OTHER IMPORTANT DATES**

- November 7: 9 a.m.-12 noon: Ethics Training at SFF
- November 21: Cattle barn construction & Mooternity setup
- December 5: Hog and arena construction
- December 12: Small animal tents & horse arena
- January 9: Cleanup & finishing work throughout all areas

weigh-in on January 14, 2021. Hogs weighing under 230 and over 310 pounds will be disqualified from the show and sale.

For more information, please contact the Fair's Agricultural Office at 561-795-6419 or [tracy@southfloridafair.com](mailto:tracy@southfloridafair.com). Please refer to the Fair's Official Premium Book for all detailed rules and regulations.

#### **MARKET ANIMAL WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS**

- Steers must weigh approximately 750 pounds by the last week of October to meet the 1000-pound minimum at check-in.
- Hogs must weigh a minimum of 230 pounds (SCALE WEIGHT) and a maximum of 310 pounds at



## 4-H AT THE SOUTH FLORIDA FAIR

You may or may not have had the opportunity to check out Palm Beach County 4-H at the South Florida Fair in previous years, but we are excited to share that the 4-H footprint will be expanded for this year's fair. Prior to 2021, all the 4-H general exhibits would have been found in Concourse building 4 and the livestock exhibits were located in the Agri-plex.

This year, visitors to the fair can view the diverse 4-H healthy living, photography, fine arts, arts and crafts, and clothing and textile exhibits in Concourse building 3, and see the impressive 4-H science, technology, engineering, math, agriculture, and robotics exhibits in the Agucation tent next to the Sundry Feed Store. Additionally, all 4-H live animal projects will be located in the Agri-plex and animal tents.



*Shown are several of the exhibits submitted by 4-H Members for the South Florida Fair. All exhibits were judged to provide constructive feedback to further youth development*



Our green clover with the 4 H's (Head, Heart, Hands, and Health) represents the global 4-H program here in the United States. Wherever you see the clover, there is 4-H!



*4-H Member Jaci Dulany showing her animal at the South Florida Fair*

Your 4-H team will also be onsite at the fair every Friday (4:00pm) and Saturday (11:00am) leading activities and sharing what 4-H is and does in Palm Beach County. We are excited for you to see the diverse projects Palm Beach County 4-H youth work on all year and learn more about what youth can do in 4-H. We hope our partnership with the South Florida Fair will inspire you to be a part of our 4-H family.



*4-H Member Emily Oschmann received a 1st place ribbon for her pictured submission to the South Florida Fair*

## Tommy Holt MEET OUR AG COMMITTEE CHAIR

The South Florida Fair, like most fairs across the country, relies on dedicated and passionate organization leaders, and board members and committee members to lead and guide the mission and focus on hand.



Our Fair is fortunate to have Tommy Holt and co-Chair Buddy McKinstry heading up our Agriculture Committee. This month's newsletter edition features Tommy Holt, who has been farming for 57 years! Tommy and Ann Holt are "staples" in the farming community. Together as a Team, they give it their all.

Throughout Tommy's 14 years serving on the South Florida Fair Board, his leadership roles have been serving as chairman of the Agriculture Committee for six years. He also currently serves on the Master Plan, Livestock and Yesteryear Village committees.

Tommy said his service on the Ag Committee "has been a lot of work but also very rewarding. It's given me an opportunity to meet and work with many new friends of agriculture."

During the coming year, Tommy added that his goals are "to continue to improve the Sunday Feed Store by making it more exciting and educational for fairgoers." Other community organizations Tommy volunteers his time to are the Florida Fruit and Vegetables Association, Farm Bureau, and the Sweet Corn Fiesta. When Tommy has any spare time, he enjoys golfing, hunting, spending time with his grandkids, and traveling with his wife.

Board members serving with Tommy and Buddy on the Agriculture Committee are Krista Basore, Donnell Childers, Diego DeLeon, Cindy Griffin, Paul Grose, Zoila Hernandez, Annis Manning, Frank Sardinha, Bob Shorr, Bobbi Jo Smith, Ron Smola, Mark Soddors, Eva Webb, and Keith Wedgworth.

Non-Board Members are Ricardo Alvarez, Laura Bloom, Todd Bonlarron, John Gentzel, Ann Hartman, Ann Holt, Millie Isiminger, Bruce and Stacy Ollis, Kristen Polacik, Richard Raid—IFAS, Jim Shine, Tiffany Thomas, Roland Yee and Caroline Villanueva.

**Contact Information**  
 Live in western Palm Beach County?  
**Extension Agent Daniel Gonzalez**  
 Dgonzalez@pbcgov.org  
 (561) 996-1656

Live in eastern Palm Beach County?  
**Extension Agent Noelle Guay**  
 Nguay@pbcgov.org  
 (561) 233-1726



**From the desk of Stacy Wakefield**  
**THE IMPORTANCE**  
**OF RECORDING**  
**VOLUNTEER HOURS...**

The South Florida Fair and Palm Beach County Expositions, Inc. records volunteer hours each year to better understand and report volunteer activity. This allows the Fair to measure the overall costs of the volunteer program and to share this information with upper management and the Board of Trustees and Directors. It also allows the Fair to create a more accurate budget to deliver the entitled benefits.

Benefits provided to all South Florida Fair volunteers are based on the hours recorded each calendar year. The five-tiered program for volunteers 13 years old and over, is designed so that the higher the tier of accomplishments, the more benefits extended.

As a non-profit organization, recording volunteer hours can also help when applying for grants. Some grants mandate that a percentage of awarded funds are matched by the organization applying for such funding. Recorded volunteer time may be used to satisfy this requirement.

Each year, the auditors for the South Florida Fair request the number of volunteers and recorded hours to ensure compliance. Recorded hours are also requested for the Annual Fair Report which is presented to the Board of Trustees and Directors.

During the Fair, there are two (2) locations for volunteers to record their hours worked. One is in the Agricultural/Livestock area during the South Florida Fair, while the other is located year-round in the Yesterday Village Volunteer Hub. Volunteers are assigned a four-digit PIN number that must be entered in the computer upon arrival and departure, all of which is managed by the Volunteer Services Manager.

Volunteer services for all the events at the South Florida Fair are most appreciated. For questions or more information, contact Stacy Wakefield, Volunteer Services Manager at 561-790-5213 or stacy@southflorida-fair.com.



**FLORIDA COAST**  
**EQUIPMENT**

*Meet our Sponsor*  
**FLORIDA COAST**  
**EQUIPMENT**

The South Florida Fair is built and stands strong through its deep and valued partners and sponsors. Florida Coast Equipment, sponsor of the AgriPlex, has been an integral partner with the Fair for many years, and in this month's newsletter edition, we celebrate them!

Here is our interview with Todd Bachman, Florida Coast Equipment President.

**Why do you believe that SFF is still important and relevant in our community?**

The Fair attracts families from all over the state to enjoy a safe environment, exposing them to events and experiences related to our South Florida community. And it allows them exposure to various animals and experiences they might not otherwise be able to be a part of.

**What type of equipment sales are the most popular here locally at your business? i.e. farm equipment? Landscaper equipment? Home, lawn, and garden equipment?**

We provide tractors, mowers, utility vehicles, loaders, excavators, and various implements to support the agricultural, construction, nursery, landscape, golf, and equestrian industries.

**How many customers do you service company-wide, and is agriculture a big part of your business clientele?**

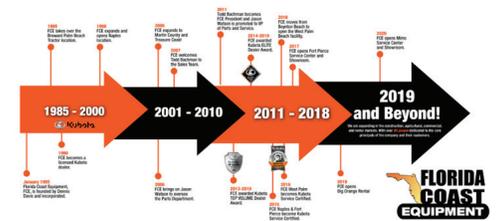
We service a very large number of customers, and the agricultural industry is a big part of that business.

**Where are the locations of your businesses? Is this a family-owned business? How many employees do you have company-wide?**

Florida Coast Equipment is a family owned business that was founded in 1985. We currently have locations in West Palm Beach, Fort Pierce, Mims, and Naples with over 100 employees. And we continue to grow!

**How has your business changed over the last 10 years? Where you see yourselves in the next 10 years?**

We have seen large growth in our community and our business. And we have grown as a company by adding employees and locations to match this demand. As we continue to grow, we look forward to adding more jobs and more locations to better support the demand of our loyal and new customers.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL RICE MONTH**

*(Article and information provided by Eva Webb, the Palm Beach Post, Susan Salisbury, and Palm Beach County Extension.)*

Did you know that September is National Rice Month, and that most of the rice in Florida is grown in Palm Beach and Hendry counties? Because of Florida's long growing season, rice plants can be harvested and then regrown for a second harvest, called a ratoon-crop.

The high nitrogen in our organic soils and the south Florida environment gives Florida grown rice higher protein than similar varieties from other states. Rice is a member of the grass family and the genus Oryza. Archeological evidence indicates

a sophisticated rice cultivation system existed in China more than 7,000 years ago. Today, there are 110 rice producing countries in the world, ranging from the Himalayan Mountains to lowland delta areas. Rice is the staple food in Asia, Latin America, parts of Africa and the Middle East.



*Continued on Page 5*

**SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL RICE MONTH**

*(Continued from Page 4)*

While rice is an important food grown throughout the world, it also serves another purpose in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), as a rotation crop with sugar cane and sweet corn. Growing rice restores the soil, removes unwanted pests, and provides a habitat for many species of native wildlife, especially wading birds.

The rice plants, resembling a sea of verdant grass, grow in about two inches of water. It is a low-input crop that does not require fertilizer, and for the most part, weeds are controlled by flooding the rice farm.

Rice planting begins in March and runs through June. Harvesting begins in July and ends in early November.

Florida Crystals utilizes precision agriculture in their rice farming practices. That includes using technology in land preparation — surveying fields and land leveling to ensure perfectly flat fields. They also use GPS-guided tractors and combines for all their field preparation, planting and harvesting.

During the 1950s, about 2,000 acres of rice was grown in the EAA. Although the rice produced satisfactory yields, the discovery of the rice “hoja blanca” (white leaf) virus in other countries led to a federal quarantine of rice production in Florida, according to University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences researchers. Rice was re-introduced in the EAA in 1977. Production has more than doubled since 2008.

Florida Crystals’ Sem-Chi rice has been sold to companies such as Winn-Dixie



and Goya, which market it under their private labels. The mill also produces rice flour and organic rice flour. Sem Chi Rice is the only rice mill in the State of Florida.

Florida ranks seventh in rice production nationally, following Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas. Florida produces less than 1 percent of the U.S. crop.

Growing rice in the EAA is generally not very profitable. Most growers plant it because flooding of the fields during rice production reduces harmful soil pests and it contributes large amounts of straw to the fields for soil tith and drainage.

Try this tasty recipe to celebrate September’s Month of Rice [www.thinkrice.com/under-500-calories/shrimp-fried-rice/](http://www.thinkrice.com/under-500-calories/shrimp-fried-rice/).

**Meet the Lettelier sisters**

**SOUTH FLORIDA FAIR LONG-TIME EXHIBITORS**

*Reprinted from Ocala Style | Posted May 1, 2020 | By Susan Smiley-Height | Photography by Alan Youngblood and Lettelier family*

Trailblazers in the cattle industry, the Lettelier sisters have been facing off against all comers since childhood and are now challenging top-level competitors.

When they were about kindergarten age, sisters Lauren and Emily Lettelier were often found toddling along in the dust of their daddy’s boots as he tended to his prized herd of cattle. Now, they command center stage in arenas such as the prestigious Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, piling up awards and honors for their own Brangus and Ultrablack cattle. The South Florida Fair also stands proud that these young ladies have been exhibitors at our regional Fair.

The Lettelier sisters are rising stars in the beef cattle industry, in which they are continuing to gain respect for their showmanship skills, marketing approaches and contributions to bettering the genetics of cattle herds worldwide. Joe and Beverly Lettelier are from Pompano



Beach, in South Florida. It was there they began to raise a family while he was a general contractor and raised cattle on the side.

“He always had cattle; we just loved cattle; my grandfather had dairy cattle,” Beverly notes. “We used to lease land and would have to drive to see our cattle and he hated to do that. He always said you have to keep an eye on your cattle to make sure everything is OK.”

Emily says her dad decided to “retire” into farm-

ing and moved the family to Mississippi, where “he ran some cows.”

But it was not long before Beverly began to miss her beloved Sunshine State.

“Dad was fine in Mississippi, but Mississippi is not where my mom wanted to live,” Emily says. “She was a Pompano Beach girl through and through (Lauren speaks up in the background, “Florida girl through and through!”). The Ocala area was the only place they could settle on and so they purchased 160 acres. It was all cotton. He cleared out the cotton and left most of the trees. He did all the fencing and planting. Mom would not take it back for the world. She loves it.”

At the time, Lauren was 5 and Emily was 4. The sisters attended St. John Lutheran School and then Trinity Catholic High School. Lauren earned a bachelor’s degree in telecommunications/news broadcasting from the University of Florida and Emily got her AA degree in nursing from Santa Fe College.

## MEET THE LETTELIER SISTERS

*(Continued from Page 5)*

"I remember going way back, bottle raising babies and riding horses bareback," Emily shares. "I don't remember a boring day. We loved it." Both girls participated in 4-H, with Lauren beginning to show animals at age 8 and Emily at about 6 or 7 years old.

"We did the Southeastern Youth Fair (the oldest and largest such fair in the nation, now in its 80th year) up through our senior year in high school. We did steers, beef heifers, lambs, chickens... Home Ec, which was one of our favorite things," Emily recalls. "I remember one year I won Best in Show for my kumquat jam. And I still think, out of everything, that's the thing my mom was most excited about."

In their teen years, when many young ladies would be thinking of boys, the Lettelier sisters say they only thought of them as who to beat in the show-ring.

"We were so competitive and so in the zone that we weren't really thinking about chasing boys when we were at the cow shows," Lauren offers. "We wanted to win, and we did very well that way. Emily and I are very competitive, even against each other. It's really been a great thing in life to learn how to be a good loser and how to be an even better winner, being gracious to everyone...even when you've won."

Those early days of traveling the cow show circuit brought the petite twosomes into close competition with full grown men.

"There are probably more young ladies in the show and travel world than one would think," Emily offers. "We'd be 8 years old showing with grown men, so that taught us we can do anything a man or boy can do. But this still is not really a woman's industry, the cattle industry or farming in general, so you have to be able to work alongside and work with men and be able to handle that."

"Yeah," Lauren asserts, "I don't want to just be in the Cattlewomen's Association, I want to be in the Cattlemen's Association too."

"My hat is off to these young ladies. I am very proud of them," offers Jo Ann Smith, of Wacahoota, which straddles the Marion/Alachua county line. Smith was, notably, named president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association in 1985.

Smith also served as president of the Florida Cattlewomen's Association from 1970 to 1972,

was named Woman of the Year in Agriculture in 1985 by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and was founding chair of the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board. In 1989, President George H. W. Bush appointed her Assistant Secretary of Marketing and Inspection of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1982 and 1988, she was named "Man of the Year in American Agriculture" by Progressive Farmer Magazine. In 2015, she was inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame and the International Meat Association.



"The Lettelier sisters were very active in 4-H," Smith recalls. "I watched them show animals. I give a lot of credit to 4-H, as participants learn at an early age how to groom, feed, and produce animals that will show well. I attribute that to what they are doing today. Their hard work and education have enhanced their ability to create a productive business. It is wonderful to see women doing so well in beef production, especially such young ladies." "Emily is most certainly a female force in our world. There are very few cattlemen in our industry who are so accomplished at such a young age. She's 27," Lauren, 28, offers. "Under Emily's leadership, Lettelier Brangus won the title of the Florida Cattlemen's Association (FCA) Premier Brangus Female, Premier Brangus Bull, Premier Brangus Exhibitor and Premier Brangus Breeder for the 2018-2019 show year. These are the four highest honors given by the FCA and are tabulated from the results of six shows across the state of Florida." In March, the sisters competed in the 2020 International Brangus Bull Show during the massive annual show and rodeo event in Houston and won first place in a class with a Black Spade bull and second in a class with a Grader bull.

"The third-place bull in that class was the Fort Worth Grand Champion bull," notes Lauren, which was "very exciting for us Florida folk." "For two women from Florida to go to Texas and hang with the big guns out there is really a testament," she adds. "It's like the Super Bowl for us." And, in another connection to the revered show in Texas, Lettelier Brangus owns full possession and half semen interest in MC Low Rider, the two-time Grand Champion Ultrablack

Brangus Bull of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Brangus cattle are three-eighths Brahma and five-eighths Angus. The Ultrablack MC Low Rider is 50 percent Brangus and 50 percent Angus.

Emily, who manages the daily operation of the family's 160-acre farm in Citra, in northeast Marion County, says they are currently running about 150 head of registered Brangus cattle and raise 15 to 20 2-year-old bulls every year for a sale in Lakeland.

"We are a feed stock producer, meaning we are raising heifers and bulls for people to better genetic their beef herds and put food on tables," she explains.

Lauren, who works full time as director of public relations and communications for the North Florida Regional Medical Center in Gainesville, and helps on the farm as time allows, says all of the work done by her, Emily and their parents, Joe and Beverly, is "trying to make a product for our customers, but it's also about showing the work that goes into these animals. This is what our industry is about."

Both sisters say the farm life is "24/7, 365," meaning long hours, with precious few days off. "Some days you might go 7am to 5pm and then some days you're up till midnight watching cows or calves. There is no set schedule," Lauren notes, her voice rising in pitch when she adds, "and there are no vacations!"

The cattle herd ranges on specially planted Tifton grasses and is fed supplemental grain and hay as needed.

The sisters say that the day-to-day work of running the farm has not been impacted by the coronavirus. The pandemic has, however, impacted the industry as a whole.

"The market has fluctuated a bit," Emily explains. "Cattle market prices have gone down. Even though beef is high in the store, the cattleman is not getting payback for their product. So, we just hope that the higher beef demand will eventually reflect on us and increase on the hoof demand."

An important angle at Lettelier Brangus is their involvement in artificial insemination (AI) and Emily and Joe both are certified AI technicians. Emily says that is important to the Brangus breed because it's making it easier for the short-haired, heat-tolerant cattle to grow more hair, through the Angus genetics, and be able to withstand cooler temperatures up north.

## MEET THE LETTELIER SISTERS

(Continued from Page 6)



“So now we are able to market Brangus to northern states and it also produces meat tenderness and meat quality as well,” she explains. “With AI, you are able to get some of the best genetics from around the world and implement it into your cattle herd.”

Emily says the first set of MC Low Rider’s calves born at their farm will soon be weaned and halter broken by Beverly, and then she and her sister can begin exhibiting them on the show circuit in hopes of earning even more awards and honors as they promote their industry. Both Emily and Lauren say an important part of their life is being able to share the things they have learned with others, particularly youth.

They hold a summer showmanship clinic at the farm each year, during which they teach students 4-H showmanship techniques and help them develop feeding schedules they can apply to their projects with steers, heifers, and bulls.

“We had our vet come out and talk to them about vaccinations and deworming,” Emily notes. “There is a lot that goes into each one of these kids’ projects. We also try to get at least two juniors in the Brangus Association each year, and some of the kids travel to shows with us and exhibit the Brangus cattle and teach the public about the beef industry and the daily work that goes into it.”

Prior to taking the position at the hospital in Gainesville, Lauren was the public information officer for the Marion County Sheriff’s Office.

“I think getting youth involved in agriculture is one of the best things you can do,” she says. “When I was working at the Sheriff’s Office, there were so many kids going through the system that I looked at and thought, ‘If they had had

a different influence, or if they had had some responsibility they were upheld to, they would be in a completely different place in their life,” she recalls. “And I just really thank our parents for giving us that tremendous gift. I don’t think you can realize that until you grow up.”

Fellow cattlegirl Laura Lee Taylor served on the International Junior Brangus Breeders Association board of directors from 1996 to 2000 and as president for 1998-1999. She says her family has been raising Brangus cattle since 1993 and was one of the first families to start showing Ultrablack cattle in 2017 in Florida.

“I came to know Lauren and Emily during the mid- ‘90s, when they started showing Brangus cattle. Their parents have raised Brangus cattle for more than 40 years in Florida and have one of the premier Brangus operations in the Sunshine State,” Taylor declares. “The Letteliers and our family have diligently worked with several shows since 2017 to allow for Ultrablack cattle to show as a division of the International Brangus Show.”

Taylor says that during the 2017 Florida State Fair, her daughter Carlee, age 7 at the time, had a stall next to Emily.

“Carlee loved the opportunity to learn from Emily that week and she has been thankful for her friendship with Emily and Lauren ever since,” Taylor recalls. “Lauren and Emily have a passion to help kids learn about the importance of showing and raising cattle and livestock. They created a clinic called ‘Champion Drive Cattle Camp’ that my children, Carlee, now 11, and Truman, 8, took part in.

They also helped my daughter’s team compete at the National Junior Brangus Show Salesmanship Contest, where the Florida Junior Team was named Reserve Champion for 2018 and 2019. My daughter competed at the 2019 National Junior Brangus Show in Texarkana and was named the High Point Junior Exhibitor for her placings in more than 10 contests. This award would have not been a reality without the mentorship and support of Emily and Lauren. We are thankful they have a passion to help youth.” Beverly Lettelier says she and her husband made sure both of their daughters were involved in lots of activities because “we feel like busy kids don’t get in trouble.”

She says all the family members are competitive and that once the girls got going, “they had to have every animal and had to enter every contest.”

“I’m afraid I forced them many times to do things they didn’t want to,” she notes with a chuckle, “but they say they loved it. I feel like kids should learn everything when they are little because they are like sponges and you can just throw everything at them. The girls stuck with the cattle and they both love to cook.”

Beverly notes that the affinity for cooking also comes naturally to her daughters. She says she always regretted not pursuing a career as a baker. So, when Emily and Lauren went off to college, she embraced her passion.

“I always wanted to be a professional baker,” she admits. “So, I took some classes and learned to decorate cakes. I make these outlandish cakes, and no one can eat them all. It is something I can do with my hands. It is intricate, artistic work. Both girls are that way. They are creative. They enjoy doing something nobody else does.”

Beverly says her daughters have become adept at navigating their way around the beef industry, “in this world really run by men,” in part because they were raised to believe they could accomplish anything that males could.

“We always told them they could do anything they wanted to do, and I think that’s especially important for young women,” Beverly explains. “They were raised driving tractors, and once you pull an animal behind you that weighs a ton, you can do anything. They always had that great confidence about them.

“From years and years ago, men have been prominent in agriculture. But the girls have taken strong steps to be able to promote the business and have taken a fresh approach to the whole business—to sell and market cattle,” Beverly continues. “They can talk to people who have been in this business their whole life and they can educate those people. For two young ladies to be successful beef producers, that’s a huge deal.”

“I was always made fun of because I was this dorky kid that showed cattle,” Lauren admits. “But I loved to show cattle,” she adds, her tone growing stronger with every word. “I think, especially for kids, if you have some passion, love to do something, keep doing it. Now, I have never been in a better position in life. My choice to get involved in agriculture made me who I am and I’m really proud of that.”

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