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<https://www.cabcattle.com/wp-content/uploads/20190603-BelvinAngusSunset.jpg>

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Belvin Angus wins CAB Commitment to Excellence Award

By Miranda Reiman

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The Hamilton family has a business card and a standing invitation from a steakhouse owner in Vancouver. They've gotten a personal tour of a sushi restaurant in Calgary. On their Belvin Angus ranch near Innisfail, Alberta, they've shared meals with fishmongers, beef marketers and some of the most renowned chefs in the country.

There are perhaps no better *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand ambassadors in Canada than Gavin and Mabel Hamilton, says CAB president John Stika.

"They've always been willing to open up their gates and share their hospitality with people from all over the beef production chain," Stika says. "Those firsthand experiences are critical to giving these guys the knowledge they need to sell more beef."

For their involvement with the brand, along with their focus on producing quality cattle that work for their commercial customers, Belvin Angus recently received the CAB Canadian Commitment to Excellence award.

Gavin and Mabel, with their son Colton and daughter Quinn, and her husband Brendyn Elliot, accepted the award on Saturday, June 8 at the annual Canadian Angus National Convention in Drumheller, Alberta.

"We like to host the people CAB brings because it's a way of telling our story, and with any luck," Mabel says, "getting rid of some of the misconceptions that are out there about what we do."

They have hosted many end-user groups, including the 50-person CAB Canadian Roundup in 2017.

Perhaps they owe it to being an easy drive from the airport, a short hour north of Calgary International and just off of Queen Elizabeth 2 highway.

Maybe they owe the desire to do it to Mabel's mom.

"My mother was always very particular," she says. "If you're going to participate, you're going to be involved."

To say they've taken that to heart is an understatement.

The Hamiltons have served on committees, judged shows and organized meetings. Mabel was a longtime director and past president of the Canadian Angus Association.

"They are committed to a quality product and customer service," says Myles Immerkar, CEO of the Canadian Angus Association. "They've been exceptional ambassadors for the Angus breed, both domestically and internationally for decades."

Their children were active in Canadian Junior Angus and volunteer with that organization today.

And it all started when the son of a Shorthorn breeder married a Hereford girl nearly 44 years ago.

"We had to find some common ground," Gavin laughs. "But I'd always liked Angus."

The maternal function, the docility and the end-product merit all in one package--it was an easy choice, Gavin says.

The couple bought their original farm in 1978, registered their first Angus heifers in 1979 and are celebrating 40 years with the breed this fall.

The last syllables of their first names blended together gave them a business name. Connections from their show ring experience gave them customers.

"It was a good way to get our name out there," Gavin says.

Uniformity has always been a key.

"We've sold a lot of bulls sight unseen," Gavin says. "If he was going to like one, he's going to like them all."

Today, what makes a bull stand out is his ability to move the program forward while still fitting in.

"Feet and structure is number one, but we're always trying to improve carcass quality without sacrificing anything we need," Brendyn says.

So they research new genetics that complement the herd that traces back to some of their original lines of Lady Blossoms and Boardwalks.

They recently purchased a bull in the top 1% for marbling as well as beef value (\$B) in the American Angus Association registry, noting their genetics also have to work in "big country."

"We want the commercial guys to be profitable," Colton says.

Longtime customer Larry Sears, Stavely, Alberta, relies on their judgement to help him reach his end-product goals.

"They do the research and they're aggressive" on moving ahead, he says. That's given Sears confidence to retain ownership for the past two decades. Noting profitability can be "hit or miss" without carcass premiums, he says, "selling on the grid has been lucrative enough to entice us to feeding more often."

These enduring relationships are key to the Belvin program and help ensure its future. With the next generation full-time on the ranch, they've grown. A few years ago, they built a sale barn with enough space to fit their growing customer base.

Looking back, Gavin can smile when he thinks of the first banker who said they wouldn't make it, but still knows that doesn't mean they can get complacent. "We've waited a long time for this," he says, as Colton adds, "We've got to keep working to keep it up."

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