



*"Serving Michigan's Cattlemen Since 1960"*

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**Photos Available**

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## **CATTLEMEN RECOGNIZE INDUSTRY LEADERS**

OKEMOS - (June 26, 2013) Four distinguished individuals and an agriculture business were recognized for their contributions and dedication to the beef industry during the Michigan Cattlemen's Association's (MCA) Summer Round-Up. "MCA's Member of the Year," was awarded to Mark Sears from Horton; "Agribusiness of the Year" belongs to Byron Center Meats in Byron Center; David and Rebecca VanDenBerg, from Hudsonville, received the "Young Members of the Year" award; Seldom Rest Farms in Niles, received "Purebred Breeder of the Year"; and "Cattle Business of the Year" went to the Oswalt Family Farms in Vicksburg.

### **Member of the Year**

The Michigan Cattlemen's Association's (MCA) "Member of the Year" is Mark Sears. He and his wife Jill own and operate a 2,500 acre, 3rd generation family farm, along with their son Matt, daughter Stephanie and son-in-law Gerrit de'Glee. The farm consists of two major enterprises, cattle and crops.

Sears was elected to the MCA Board of Directors in 2000. As a Director, he represents MCA on the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Natural Resources Conservation Service committees. In addition, he serves on the Bull Evaluation Committee. Sears has been a loyal supporter of the MCA Bull Evaluation Sale and has been the volume bull buyer for several years.

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**Agribusiness of the Year**

The Michigan Cattlemen’s Association (MCA) awarded the distinction of MCA’s Agribusiness of the Year to Byron Center Meats. In 1946, Gerald and Gert Sytsma first opened this business as a meat locker plant. In 1966, the oldest son, Jim Sytsma purchased the business. Today, the business has three major divisions; a retail store, custom processing and food service supply. Byron Center Meats is a modern, federally inspected meat plant servicing over 900 producers from Michigan and surrounding states. The third generation has taken the reigns with Steve Sytsma as President and Doug Sytsma as Office Manager.

**Young Members of the Year**

The Michigan Cattlemen’s Association (MCA) awarded the “Young Members of the Year” honor to David and Rebecca VanDenBerg. They are the owners of VanDenBerg Angus, a commercial and purebred Angus cow/calf operation committed to producing feeder calves, Angus bulls and replacement heifers that excel in the areas of carcass quality, growth and fertility. The couple incorporates the latest technology into their operation. They use ultrasound for pregnancy testing and to measure carcass quality. Genomic testing technology is used to assist in the identification of animals they believe excel in the traits they target.

**Purebred Breeder of the Year**

The Michigan Cattlemen’s Association (MCA) awarded Seldom Rest Farms the honor of “Purebred Breeder of the Year,” for the impact their breeding program has made on the purebred industry. The farm is operated by Bruce, Scott and Andrew Foster of Niles. Their purebred registered Angus breeding program focuses on raising high quality, proven genetics that fit all aspects of the beef cattle industry. Their herd includes a foundation of the most prominent cow families in the Angus breed.

Seldom Rest Farms produced the high-indexing bull of the 2012 MCA/MSU Bull Evaluation Program and the Supreme Champion Bull at the 2011 MCA Beef Expo.

The Foster family was the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association’s Region I environmental Stewardship Award winner. Bruce Foster served on the MCA Board of Directors and was the Purebred Council Chair. Scott Foster currently serves on the Board of Directors of the American Angus Association.

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### **Cattle Business of the Year**

The Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA) selected Oswald Family Farms, as "MCA Cattle Business of the Year". Prior to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Oswald family began farming in Kalamazoo county; breaking ground with mules and tiling the marsh. Some years later, grandson Gordon put together a small herd of Angus cows which eventually grew to a 350 head commercial cow/calf herd.

Gordon and Bonnie's sons, Scott and Steve, have enlarged the scope of the operation. Besides the cowherd, they have a commercial sheep flock with 1,200 ewes, an on-farm licensed retail store and a freezer beef and lamb enterprise.

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The Michigan Cattlemen's Association is an affiliate of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and represents all segments of the beef cattle industry including cattle breeders, producers and feeders. It is a grassroots policy development organization for the beef business. Through the Michigan Cattlemen's Association, cattle producers work to create a positive business environment, while providing consumers with a safe and wholesome product.



MCA Director, Garry Wiley (rt), presents the MCA Member of the Year award to Mark Sears and his wife Jill.



MCA Director, Gary Voogt (middle) presents the MCA Agri-Business Award to the Sytsma family including: Laura, Steve, Jim and Ruth Sytsma, owners of Byron Center Meats.



David and Rebecca VanDenBerg, from Coopersville, received the MCA Young Members of the Year award. The VanDenBergs are shown with their children, Kyle, Kelsey and Derek.



The MCA Purebred Breeder of the Year was awarded to Seldom Rest Farms from Niles. Pictured are the partners: Scott, Bruce and Andrew Foster.



MCA President-Elect, Dennis Peterson (2<sup>nd</sup> left) presents the MCA Cattle Business of the Year award to Oswald Family Farms from Vicksburg. Representing the Oswald family are: Steven, Gordon, Bonnie and Scott Oswald.