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The leaders in my life don't always have the title that would make them a leader. They are a leader because they care, they guide, and they show me how to put one foot in front of the other. A leader guides by example, exhibiting the traits for a good leader, being kind, strong, brave, loyal, smart, bold, honest, patient, and resilient. Through example, a leader teaches the steps to rebuild after the storm - big or small, win or lose.

The AGJA works hard to build strong leaders to carry on the legacy of our organization. I've watched and learned from directors and mentors that have shown me what it means to embrace the traits that embody a good leader. I've been fortunate to experience these leaders behind the scenes as the AGJA ambassador. I've got to grow my leadership skills with some of the best. At the 2021 Junior Nationals, I was paired with Sadie to be my mentor, she encouraged me and checked up on me during junior nationals. Then I got to watch her and other directors lead by example, showing me through their actions and their help at Cattlemen's Congress what it means to be a leader. They showed me that a true leader doesn't just tell you what to do, they jump in and do it with you. Cattlemen's Congress was one of my favorite experiences. I watched exhibitors show strong leadership by winning with humility and losing with dignity. I watched exhibitors congratulate others when they wanted that win more than anything. One of the most humbling experiences at Cattlemen's Congress was the pen show. I watched groups of cattle come and go, I watched the families that had worked hard to grow these calves. I listened and learned from the judge - growing my leadership skills. This experience reminded me of a quote I once heard that said "never allow success to cloud your judgment; never allow defeat to cloud your emotions".

When I leave these events, I bring home with me knowledge. I have been given the opportunity to share this knowledge. I have embraced the opportunity to grow my leadership skills by helping younger youth with their 4-H projects. I get to spend time with young exhibitors and their bucket calves. I get to guide them, be their mentor, and be someone they can turn to and ask questions. I spend time with them, teaching them about their calf. One little boy has become one of my favorites. He is 6 years old, he used to be very shy. When he would come to 4-H he would barely talk to anyone. In the last year, he has opened up and talks to me at every meeting. I ask him about his bottle calf, Katherine, and he tells me how she likes to chase him around the yard. At one 4-H meeting, he pulled me aside and asked me to come visit his bottle calf. I had a lot going on at school, but I wanted to grant this little man this request.

So I worked with my mom and we scheduled a day to go see him and his bottle calf. I had so much fun that afternoon, she had gotten out of her pen, so we had to go get her from the yard. She chased us back to the house. Then I showed him how to work with the halter and comb her hair. I shared some tips about what not to do. Then, we played baseball. I don't necessarily like baseball, but he asked me to play.

To me this is being a leader. You take the time to get to know those you lead. You spend time learning and playing together. If I had just spent time with him and Katherine (the calf), it would have still been a great day, but we made it an amazing day by doing so much more together.

I've learned that an inspirational leader is calm under pressure, is disciplined, shows their good and bad sides but is strong enough to say I'm sorry, listens, is resilient, shows integrity and develops others. I've gotten the amazing opportunity to grow my leadership skills in the past year by being the AGJA ambassador. I've gotten to take what I learned and develop these traits even more in myself by leading a group of clover kids with their bucket calves.