

MASTER ADVOCATE

By Codi Vallery-Mills

It's a scenario many in the Great Plains can relate to this year – drought. An extreme drought in Arkansas in 2011 is what set the career course Ryan Goodman finds himself on today.

Watching his family and home state suffer the impact of an intense drought caused Goodman to reach out to mainstream media to help shine light on the situation in Arkansas.

When CBS News and later CNN began to run coverage on the drought in Arkansas, Goodman felt like he was making a difference. "A big win came when CNN gave me the opportunity to share about agriculture on their site," Goodman says.

And that was how it all began. For the next 6 years, Goodman found himself in a variety of everyday work roles – including a stint with the Montana Stockgrowers – but the speaking out and telling others his agricultural story has never waned.

Advocacy Method

Goodman is what the agricultural industry calls an "advocate" – someone who publicly supports the industry. Through his online social media presence, blog, podcasts, speaking events and participation in Team Beef he has helped share the message of agriculture, debunking myths and creating friends along the way.

Team Beef, funded by the Beef Checkoff, is a team of athletes who promote beef as part of a healthy diet and lifestyle for active participants in events ranging from 5k fun runs to ultramarathons and triathlons.

Goodman says it's an issue that he really took to heart and dove into when he lived in Montana. "You can't help but become a runner and explore when you live in Montana," Goodman says. "That led to a healthier lifestyle and really seeing where beef benefited me."

This year he completed his first 50-mile ultramarathon and he can tell other runners beef helped him do it.

"I can first connect with other athletes as a runner, and then we might get to talking about my Team Beef jersey and it leads to a conversation about beef as a healthy protein source," Goodman says. "There is a perception that beef isn't the healthiest but I have found that runners are looking for validation to eat and love beef. After we talk, they are excited. I have had

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Ryan Goodman

positive responses from the running community."

Connecting with others on an emotional level is one of the first musts of good advocacy, Goodman says. Then he says you are better able to have the conversations about farming and food. "And it's not about educating someone. No one likes to be educated. It's about connecting and having a conversation. Education is the secondary," Goodman says.

Niche Job

Today Goodman resides in Parker, Colo., where he works for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff as director of grassroots advocacy and spokesperson development.

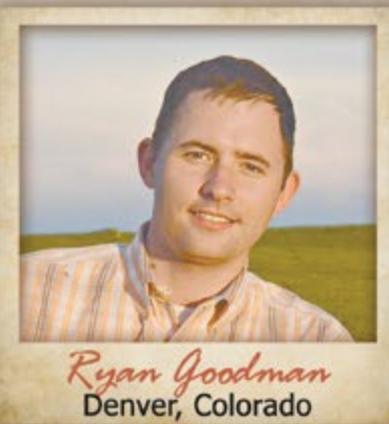
In this role he is busy facilitating the Master of Beef Advocacy program, which helps people become better acquainted with the beef industry through online courses and training workshops.

He also is creating spokespeople for the cattle industry. "That's the rewarding part of the business – the influencers, the producers – people are why I get to do the work that I do," Goodman says.

Goodman is quick to put everyone's fears of having to start a blog to be an ag advocate aside. Everyone, he says, can be an advocate in their own way.

"My goal, job really, is about helping people find the power of their strengths and use them for agriculture. Advocacy is not a social media game or a young person's game. It can be about policymaking or having a conversation in the grocery aisle - whatever fits that person's strengths," Goodman says.

The pinnacle of connecting consumers to the producers of the food they eat hasn't been reached yet. Because of that there are still false narratives about food production reaching consumer ears. "A lot of times that message is louder than ours," Goodman says. "The message is not ours and it's not reality. That is why it is critical people still advocate for agriculture."



Ryan Goodman
Denver, Colorado

29-years-old

Director of Grassroots Advocacy and Spokesperson Development, NCBA

B.S in Animal Science, Oklahoma State University

Background: Raised on a 1,200 head cow/calf and stocker operation in Arkansas he quickly learned the cattle industry from the farm to the feedlot. He went on to work in the Big Horns of Wyoming on a ranch and later took the manager of communications job with the Montana Stockgrowers Association. Today he works for the National Beef Cattlemen's Association, a contractor to the beef checkoff.

Industry Involvement: Montana Agricultural Experiment Station State Advisory Council, Team Beef ultramarathon runner, cattle marketer and freelancer.

Honors & Awards: 2013 Agriculture Advocate of the Year, 2013 Communicator of the Year, 2012 AgChat Foundation Farm Blog of the Year

Advocacy Advice: Learn how to take criticism from others and from your own community. "Taking criticism is an important piece of the puzzle. Don't dwell on the negative."

His communication style: Straightforward, respectful, transparent.

On his playlist: A lover of the Texas Red Dirt music scene, Goodman says Cross Canadian Ragweed and Jason Boland are music musts.