



**YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS
NETWORK**

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2022 YEAR IN REVIEW



**LALLEMAND BIOFUELS
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Young Professionals Network

About the YPN

The Renewable Fuels Association's Young Professionals Network (YPN) was formed in July 2020 and is dedicated to bringing together innovative and dedicated young professionals from across the U.S. ethanol industry. The YPN is a community of young leaders with a common goal to advance their respective businesses, build new relationships, and work with one another to identify new opportunities that grow and strengthen the renewable fuels industry.

Advisory Board

Jackie Hayes, NCERC at SIUE
Chairperson & YPN Member

Tony Leiding, Trenton Agri Products
RFA Board Member & YPN Member

Janet Fisher, Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits
YPN Member

Thomas Harwood, AI-Corn Clean Fuel
RFA Board Member & YPN Member

Mikayla McKenna, Renewable Fuels Association
RFA Staff & YPN Member

Robert White, Renewable Fuels Association
RFA Advisory

Member Testimonial

"Joining the RFA's YPN has been, hands down, the best decision I made in 2022. The networking and mentorship opportunities has helped me build new business relationships. I now have a community that looks to support and advance me in the renewable fuels arena. I look forward to continue participating with our generation as we guide, grow, and strengthen this industry." - Monica Bailey, Laboratory Manager, Big River United Energy



A Letter from the YPN Chairperson

Dear YPN Supporter,


As we near the end of the 2022 calendar year, I'm pleased to report that the Renewable Fuels Association's Young Professionals Network is nearly 200 members strong with representation from ethanol plants across the country, vendor companies of all sizes, and supporting organizations that make up the great industry that we serve. With industry events having fully-resumed since the COVID pandemic, we were able to meet throughout the year, bringing together members of the industry from all backgrounds through the YPN - a venue that encourages making new connections and sharing expertise.

Now more than ever, it's critically important to consider the long-term trajectory of the industry. It is the YPN's goal to help prepare future leaders to further the incredible momentum that its current leaders generated through decades of hard work and dedication. In 2022, with a well-established calendar of events, it became a priority of the YPN leadership to make sure that our organization not only serves its members, but also serves current leadership and the industry as a whole.

One key way that we're doing this is by sharing the results of our internal-YPN focus groups and surveys through reports and presentations. In fact, you can find a summary of our most recent focus groups on page 7 of this report. We were also given a golden opportunity to do this at the 2022 National Ethanol Conference, which you can learn about on page 3. I can say with certainty that this is not only something we plan to continue in 2023, but will expand by working with the leadership and membership at the RFA going forward.

As we enter 2023, I'm particularly excited for the continued fellowship that the YPN brings to its members. We have exciting plans to bring value to the industry by continuing to invest in YPN's future. A special thank you goes to the RFA and Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits for their support and generosity! Without their leadership, none of this would be possible.

With gratitude,



Jackie Hayes

Chairperson of the Young Professionals Network

Director of Business Development & Client Relations at the National Corn to Ethanol Research Center

In-Person Events Recap

National Ethanol Conference | February 21-23, 2022

In New Orleans, LA, several hundred ethanol industry participants gathered to discuss important topics affecting ethanol producers and opportunities for continued growth. YPN members were able to engage at the NEC for the first time at a social hour event held at the conference hotel and also were featured on the conference agenda!



Due to the generosity of the Renewable Fuels Foundation, five YPN members were able to attend the NEC through the Bob Sather Memorial Scholarship: Daehwan Kim, an Assistant Professor of Biology at Hood College; Justin Diehm, Commodity Manager at East Kansas Agri-Energy; Kyle Sonderman, Lab Manager at Show Me Ethanol; Traci Menke, Executive Assistant at Renewable Fuels Nebraska; Jessica Sodeke, Ethanol Program Manager at Nebraska Ethanol Board; and Joe Shanle, Plant Manager, Trenton Agri Products.

"Ethanol's Next Generation: Developing an Effective Workforce" - Following several discussions and surveys within the YPN, leadership consolidated quantitative and qualitative results and presented them at the conference to kick off the discussion. YPN Chairperson Jackie Hayes presented on the young professionals' attitudes towards different themes, such as access to industry leaders, access to networking events/learning opportunities, organization- and industry-wide succession planning, and other important topics related to preparing the next generation of leaders.



During the panel, which included Danci Baker of Ringneck Energy, Janet Fisher of Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits, Mick Henderson of Commonwealth Agri-Energy, Tony Leiding of Trenton Agri Products, and Nick Pirotte of RSM US, YPN members and industry leaders discussed different ways they've participated in or supported these types of efforts and made recommendations for recruiting and retaining top notch talent within the ethanol industry.

"I made MANY contacts at NEC and feel so energized and excited about the future of our industry. Not only was I able to network and learn more about ethanol, I am also able to take back some of that to build our own events and programming. We've already connected with some futures speakers and invited companies to see the benefit of growing with Nebraska ethanol." - Jessica Sodeke, Nebraska Ethanol Board



Fuel Ethanol Workshop | June 12-14, 2022

Over the summer, dozens of YPN members gathered at the 2022 FEW in Minneapolis, MN. For the first time, the YPN hosted an event in collaboration with a state association, Renewable Fuels Nebraska. During the networking event, YPN members met with each other as well as industry leaders representing the RFN who answered questions from the YPN members as part of a "Table Topics" activity. These topics included items such as carbon capture opportunities, ethanol advocacy, and networking and vendor relations and encouraged those at the table to discuss these topics and ask their table's industry "vet" to answer questions related to the topic.



Following, RFN hosted their full member networking event, the "High Octane Lounge". A special thank you to RFN and the industry leaders for their generosity and support of the YPN!



Also at the conference, Janet Fisher of Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits spoke on behalf of YPN on a workforce development panel. During her presentation, *A Forum for Ethanol's Next Generation: RFA's Young Professionals Network*, she presented select findings from YPN's 2022 Annual Member Survey. The results shed light on young industry members' outlooks on opportunities for long-term career growth in the US ethanol industry and other themes related to professional development. YPN was grateful for the chance to participate in what became a robust discussion about development of the industry's next generation of leaders.

In-Person Events Recap

RFA Annual Meeting | September 27-29, 2022

The third and final in-person event in 2022 took place at the RFA Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, MN where over twenty YPN members gathered to participate in a breakfast with industry veterans. Three members of RFA's Board of Directors, Rick Schwarck of Absolute Energy, Dave Soveriegn of Golden Grain Energy, Mike Jerke of Southwest Iowa Renewable Energy joined the moderator and YPN member Eric Chase and Chase Nedrow Industries for a discussion about topics relevant to current and future leaders, such as ways to develop professionally, how to set yourself up for future promotions, and choosing the right members for your team.

Members from the audience were also encouraged to ask questions in order to allow for this event to be of service to all YPN members in attendance. YPN members also received their 2022 gift at the event, which was a stadium blanket with the YPN logo on it. Following the breakfast, all of the YPN members were invited to participate in sub-meetings that led up to the RFA Annual Meeting, which was a great opportunity for staff of companies who were not currently RFA members. That evening, everyone reconvened at the RFA networking event, a baseball game at the Milwaukee Brewers Stadium.



Member Testimonial

"I am relatively new to the YPN Membership, but in the short time I've been part of it, I have taken advantage of several of the online talks and virtual discussions. For someone that has recently joined the ethanol industry, it was refreshing to see how welcoming and resourceful this group is. YPN group has helped in connecting to the right people in the industry to address specific questions. Resourceful, community feeling and fun vibe would be my description." - Melanie Meek, Laboratory Manager, Commonwealth Agri-Energy



Virtual Events Recap



Following the 2021 calendar year, a survey was sent to the YPN membership asking for feedback on what types of member engagements they'd take advantage of. Educational webinars was a common theme and so the group took advantage of the subject matter experts that exist within its membership base to provide a robust calendar of webinars. This was also a great way to provide programming to those who are not able to travel to the in-person events! Thank you to the industry leaders who provided webinars for YPN members and to the YPN members who shared their expertise with their peers.

Webinar: Supply Chains Disruptions and How to Respond

April 13, 2022

Speakers (YPN Members): Jordan Thompson, Business Development at FAGEN, INC.; Kim Nguyen, Director of Supply Chains, Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits

Webinar: Carbon Intensity and CI Accounting Best Practices

May 25, 2022

Speaker: Lauren Taylor, Manager of Environmental Services at PROtect, LLC

Webinar: Commodity Trading & Merchandising

July 19, 2022

Speaker (YPN Member): Anthony (T.J.) Lindburg, Grain Buyer/Logistics Coordinator, Big River Resources West Burlington, LLC.

Online Panel Discussion: Leadership Qualities

August 31, 2022

Speakers: Tony Leiding, President of Trenton Agri Products (YPN Member); Geoff Cooper, CEO of RFA; Angus Ballard, President & General Manager of Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits |

Moderated by Alison Newell

Webinar: Morning Consult Poll Results, Messaging to Younger Consumers

November 15, 2022

Speaker: Ken Colombini, Communications Director, Renewable Fuels Association

Focus Groups: Discussion on the Industry's Strategy to Message to Young Consumers

November 29 & December 1, 2022

The findings of this focus group are summarized on the next page.

Industry Discussion Summaries

Messaging to 18-34 Year Old Consumers

Background:

During the Renewable Fuels Association's Annual Meeting, RFA Communications Director Ken Colombini shared the results of a series of focus groups conducted by Morning Consult that found consumers who are ages 18-34 polled the highest out of all age groups who had no knowledge about ethanol or had no opinion (52%). 61% of them also are favorable towards ethanol. With these considerations in mind, the RFA's Young Professionals Network reviewed the results of the polls via a webinar given by Ken on November 15, 2022, which were followed by two focus groups with YPN members on November 29 and December 1. The purpose was to research how the ethanol industry could improve its strategy to educate younger consumers on the benefits of ethanol.

Focus Groups:

During the two focus groups, the same four questions were asked and are listed below for reference. The following contents of this report provide summaries on what the responses to the questions were and give guidance on how the ethanol industry could better connect with younger consumers aged 18-34.

1. Why do you think so many 18-34 year olds polled have no opinion about topics surrounding fuel ethanol? Is it lack of education/awareness about ethanol, indifference, or other factors?
2. Do you think it's important to raise awareness and support from 18-34 year olds?
3. What kinds of marketing and education have you encountered about ethanol in your daily life outside of work? Do you think it's effective? What would make it more effective?
4. What are the best platforms through which to reach 18-34 year olds? What messaging would be most effective to entice them to support fuel ethanol.

Executive Summary:

- There are too few resources available and targeted for 18-34 year olds for them to have access to educational tools that teach them about the benefits of ethanol. The education that is being done by the industry is not currently serving this portion of the consumer base and it's an opportunity for the industry to hone in on a target demographic that could be a loyal consumer base, if we strategically designed messaging and used channels that they use.
- If we do not do more to educate this audience, the opportunity for misinformation to grow exists. While the industry's approach to combating misinformation is robust, there's little being done in a proactive manner to educate this audience. More needs to be done at the community level by the ethanol plants and companies in this space so that the communities we serve are aware of the benefits of ethanol.
- Social media is an underutilized tool, TikTok in particular, as it not only is a primary source of information for this audience, but it's an opportunity to provide more dynamic content and utilize messengers (influencers) that have already done the work to gain the trust of this audience.
- Younger audiences are more likely to do something or be comfortable with something after seeing someone else who is similar to them do it. That's why using influencers on social media might be a good strategy to reach this audience.
- When communicating with this audience, who the messenger is matters. The industry needs to partner with people/organizations that look and sound like this generation of consumers. Utilizing our existing channels will not work, as those have been designed to target an older demographic.
- Younger consumers may consider electric vehicles as the only solution because they've not been presented with low-carbon fuel alternatives. Appropriate language needs to be used when talking about electric vehicles, and we need to avoid picking winners and losers by highlighting ethanol as one of multiple solutions, and why it's the best option in certain circumstances. When we start polarizing, then we can put ourselves in the losing seat of a PR war.
- Education should start when the consumer starts driving and is responsible for choosing their fuel. To address this, more digital curriculum for ag teachers or drivers ed instructors should be developed. These resources can also be given to individual ethanol plants as part of their community relations strategy. Plus, it could help to recruit bright minds and thinkers to the ethanol industry if they know the benefits from a younger age.

2023 Calendar of Events



January 2023

All Member Survey

February 2023

Webinar - Topic: TBD

March 1, 2023

Young Professionals Network Event at the National Ethanol Conference
Orlando, FL

April 2023

Webinar - Topic: TBD

June 13, 2023

Young Professionals Network Social Hour at the 2023 Fuel Ethanol Workshop
Omaha, NE

August 2023

Webinar - Topic: TBD

September 26-27, 2023

RFA Annual Meeting - YPN Engagement TBA
Des Moines, IA

November 2023

Webinar - Topic: TBD

Check for an updated calendar of events on EthanolRFA.org/YPN/!

Opportunity For Supporting Organizations to Host YPN Events

Due to some YPN members' limitations to travel, we encourage state-level trade associations and other regional based groups to consider hosting YPN events on a regional basis. While YPN's leadership will continue to maintain a robust schedule for national events, we welcome the support to bring YPN members together for networking opportunities. If you're interested in hosting an event, contact the YPN leadership committee.

Become a YPN Member!

The YPN is a community of young leaders with a common goal to advance their respective businesses forward, build new relationships, and work with one another to identify new opportunities that grow and strengthen the renewable fuels industry.

**Access the
online application:**



Recruitment for the Young Professionals Network takes place year-round on a rolling basis and is free to join. To qualify to be a member, you must be 39 years old or younger, employed full time by a company in the ethanol industry or stakeholder industries, and support the RFA's mission to drive expanded demand for American-made renewable fuels and bio-products worldwide.

To apply, visit EthanolRFA.org/YPN and access the online application. Once your application is submitted and your eligibility to be a member is verified, someone from the YPN's steering committee will reach out to you to notify you of upcoming events and networking opportunities. An active YPN membership is required to participate in all YPN in-person and virtual events and all YPN members are required to participate in at least one event per calendar year in order to maintain their membership.

In order to support the long-term success of the ethanol industry, the Young Professionals Network is open to all young professionals, regardless of membership status with the RFA.

Consider a membership for your organization at the Renewable Fuels Association:

Amplify Your Voice on Capitol Hill

The RFA advocates on behalf of our members and works with state and federal policy makers to promote increased use of renewable fuels through supportive policies, regulations, and research and development initiatives.

Amplify Your Voice in the Industry

By becoming a member of RFA, you will be provided with the technical and regulatory information needed to make smart business decisions and opportunities to make your company's mark on the renewable fuels industry.

Amplify Your Voice with Consumers

In addition to our marketing and promotion efforts that educate consumers on the benefits of renewable fuels, RFA gives our members the tools they need to communicate effectively with these and other important audiences.

Ready to learn more?

Visit EthanolRFA.org or email Robert White at rwhite@ethanolrfa.org!

Thank you to our Sponsor!



LALLEMAND BIOFUELS & DISTILLED SPIRITS

Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits is an industry leader in supplying fermentation products and value-added services to the ethanol industry. We specialize in the research, development, production and marketing of yeast, yeast nutrients, enzymes, and antimicrobial agents.

A vital part of the ethanol production process, fermentation products from Lallemand Biofuels & Distilled Spirits have been designed and selected to create value by tailoring objective solutions to ethanol plant needs.

Their value-creating approach is built upon a team of experienced technical sales and service professionals who serve as consultants to alcohol plant staff, identifying specific needs and providing targeted products, training, troubleshooting and laboratory services. LBDS is dedicated to supporting the industry with high quality, cutting edge products and value-creating technical service and education.

Through the Ethanol Technology Institute (our educational arm of LBDS), they provide numerous education training programs such as The Alcohol School, The Biofuels Academy, Lunch and Learns and also publishes The Alcohol Textbook (latest 6th edition now available).

For more information, please check out their website at www.LBDS.com.



- *Alcohol School – Vienna, Austria- April 16-21, 2023*
 - *Alcohol School – Montreal, Canada- September 10-15, 2023*
 - *Alcohol School: Extra Credit Craft Distilling Seminar -Montreal, Canada- September 12-13, 2023*
- For more information please visit: www.lbds.com/education





To learn more, visit EthanolRFA.org/YPN



Since 1981, the Renewable Fuels Association has been the leading trade association for America's ethanol industry, working to drive expanded demand for American-made renewable fuels and bioproducts worldwide. To learn more about the RFA, visit EthanolRFA.org.

RFA Headquarters
16024 Manchester Rd. Suite 101
Ellisville, MO 63011
(636) 594-2284

Washington D.C. Office
425 3rd St SW. Suite 1150
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 289-3835