

Beauty and Grace

Donned with the signature red jacket, Miss American Angus is much more than a ribbon girl at shows. She is a symbol, an advocate, a vessel of knowledge; she is an ambassador, not only for the Angus breed, but for the entire cattle industry.

by Lindsay King, assistant editor

Yes, she has a crown, sash and great expectations, but Miss American Angus plays a role few could fill in the Angus world. The opportunity is abounding, responsibility unending, but the impact is everlasting.

For the first time in 51 years, Miss American Angus is a Pennsylvania native. Madison Weaver, Ephrata, Pa., was crowned Miss American Angus at the fifth-annual Angus Convention hosted Nov. 3-5, 2018, in Columbus, Ohio.

Contestants for the 2019 title included Weaver; Lindsey Decker, Philo, Ill.; Reagan Skow, Palisade, Neb.; McKayla Raines, Seaman, Ohio; and Katie Brock, Stilesville, Ind.

Each contestant applied for the scholarship competition in the spring, and the application was considered in the judging for the title. While in Ohio, each contestant gave a speech titled “Believing in Better,” answered impromptu questions, took a written exam and were interviewed by three judges.

Her story

It was with shaking hands of disbelief and a grin from ear-to-ear that Weaver told her story.

“When I walked on stage, I figured there was no way I could be crowned. I figured I would just head home and it’d be business as usual,” Weaver says



Madison Weaver, Ephrata, Penn., will reign as Miss American Angus in 2019.

of the crowning. “When they called my name, all sorts of emotions flew through my head.”

It was a hug from Cindy Ahearn, newly elected Angus Auxiliary president, that caused Weaver to realize the full weight of what had just happened on stage.

The Penn State University freshman is studying animal science

and agricultural business with aspirations to study ruminant nutrition in the future with possible aspirations to attend veterinary school.

Her year as Miss American Angus will surely solidify or alter those plans.

“I am looking forward to gaining more knowledge about the industry and helping producers improve their herds any way I can,” Weaver says.

She wants to leave a lasting impact on those she meets in the coming months as previous young women in this role have on her.

The year was 2011 and Paige Wallace was reigning as Miss American Angus. Weaver distinctly remembers the presence Wallace had over a room of queens.

“It was my first junior nationals and I remember at the queen’s luncheon I was just amazed by Paige,” Weaver says. “Miss American Angus is someone I have always looked up to, no matter who held the title. She is always personable, and I can’t believe I get to be for other girls what Miss American Angus has always been for me.”

A family tradition

Weaver credits her mom, a queen in her own right in the dairy industry, with the confidence and

encouragement to compete for the title in the first place.

"I remember checking the box that I wanted to run for Miss American Angus and just thinking 'wow, this is really happening,'" Weaver says of the scholarship application she filled out last spring.

She came in as the first-place winner in the girl's category for the ten scholarships awarded to five girls and five boys by the Angus Auxiliary. Though the previous Miss Pennsylvania Angus queen is no stranger to holding a prestigious title, she is excited for the traveling opportunities in the coming year.

"Wearing the crown is an amazing and humbling opportunity, I am honored to walk in the footsteps of the previous holders of the Miss American Angus title," she says.

Though Weaver is grateful for her roots on the East coast, she is ready to grow wings and explore other Angus operations and regions. The Midwest, in particular, catches her eye.

After making her debut at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Ky., Weaver makes her way to Denver at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS).

"I have never been to the NWSS, so I am looking forward to attending that event and seeing all Colorado has to offer producers," Weaver says.

It was the 2011 National Junior



Presented by the American Angus Auxiliary, Weaver is the 51st Miss American Angus to serve as an ambassador for The Business Breed.

Angus Show (NJAS) when she jumped into the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) with both feet. Though she is an avid competitor in various contests at the NJAS, Weaver found her stride through the extemporaneous public speaking contest.

Preparation is key

"The NJAA has truly prepared me to carry this title," Weaver says. "Going to nationals and competing in public speaking, quiz bowl and the essay contest got me ready for this role and the contest. I am so very thankful for the association."

Paying it forward is a lesson Weaver's parents instilled in her from a young age. She has watched her peers and adults alike, both succeed and fail at various endeavors. What stuck with her is that none of them quit their service to the Angus industry, regardless of the outcome.

"Their actions taught me true

leaders do not need to hold a title," Weaver explains of the leadership style she has witnessed in various Pennsylvania Angus Association members as well as past MAA and state title holders.

Jera Pipkin, Miss American Angus 2015-2016, left the biggest impression on Weaver as she thinks about who she wants to be as a national title holder for the Angus and cattle industry.

"She was very knowledgeable and she kind of took me under her wing," Weaver says of Pipkin's influence on her while she served as the Pennsylvania Angus Princess.

Every Miss American Angus has a unique take on how to use the title to the best of her ability. Many queens have visited elementary schools and stood in grocery store aisles talking to consumers about the value of red meat in their diet.

"I am most excited to talk to younger girls and serve as a role model for them, as well as interacting with producers and consumers to discuss the industry," Weaver says. "Angus is definitely the most dominant breed in the industry. We are setting industry trends, we are the standard other breeds are trying to meet and exceed."

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The Winning Speech: Better

"Our Mission is to provide programs, services, technology, and leadership to enhance the genetics of the Angus Breed, broaden its influence with the beef industry, and expand the market for superior tasting, high quality Angus beef world wide." This is the current mission the American Angus Association strives to work towards. We believe in bettering our association, so we can get the most out of our industry. I find that our industry benefits us in three major ways.

1. By Bettering our cattle
2. By Bettering our product

And,

3. By Bettering ourselves

So lets look at this a little closer.

First, by bettering our cattle

In 1873, a man was making a journey across the Atlantic to transport four black-hided bulls to America. When the bulls got to their destination in Victoria, Kan., beef breeders were not accepting.

They found it odd that the bulls were black hided, especially considering that Shorthorn was the dominant breed at the time. The bulls were also considered odd because of their polled genetics. But even with all the critics, the man kept his head up, for he knew that these bulls were the start of something great that the United States beef breeders could not wrap their head around. He believed in **better** for our industry. Ten years later, a breed association was formed for the black-hided cattle and an empire was started that is beyond well known in the United States.

Who is the man who started it all you might ask? His name was George Grant, and the four bulls he brought, were the first Angus bulls in America.

It is amazing to see how far we have come since George Grant's time. With programs such as DNA testing and Angus Herd Improvement Records, Angus breeders can find the weaknesses and strengths in their cattle's pedigrees, and work to breed for

better cattle. With publications like the *Angus Journal*, and TV specials like Angus TV, members can stay up-to-date on current issues in the industry as well.



This is all because someone stepped up and rose to the challenge, to build a breed and product, that no one thought was possible. **They believed in better.**

The second way the Angus industry benefits us is by **bettering our product.**

In the 1970s, if you went into a grocery store or a restaurant, the quality beef you were getting was hit or miss. In 1978, a group of beef producers were discussing the beef industry

and the inconsistent product that was provided to consumers. To be frank, they were not proud of what they saw.

They collectively said, "**We can do better.** We can produce beef that's extremely tender, juicier and always packed with flavor." In that same year, while working with meat scientists from the Ohio State University, the *Certified Angus Beef®* brand came to life.

When consumers hear the word Angus, many immediately think of a hot juicy steak that tastes so good they don't have the words to describe it. Others don't understand why CAB is the go-to choice and why they should pay more for it. The founders of Certified Angus Beef believed in a better product.

But a product is only as good as the consumer expectation it meets. As the current generation of Angus producers, we need to take our product to the next level, by not just reaching the audience that likes CAB, but reaching the audience that is not aware of or does not understand our product.

Finally, we need to use the skills we have learned in this association to **better ourselves.**

Many believe that we are in charge of bettering angus cattle, but in reality, we use the angus cattle to better ourselves. As juniors and adults, it's important to take the hard-working, learned skills, that Angus cattle and agriculture have taught us and use those skills to pursue our goals. The Angus association

uses this concept as an opportunity to develop youth. In 1951, the first junior membership was issued, and as the years went on, contests, scholarships, and shows were developed, to provide juniors with limitless opportunities.

For me, I find that I am an example of a junior with limitless opportunities. When I was 12 years old, attending the National Junior Angus Show, my mom encouraged me to compete in the extemporaneous public speaking contest. Reluctantly, I said yes. I was so nervous and so scared of failing. Some may have said that I did fail, because my speech was only 30 seconds long. But to me, this wasn't a failure. It just showed that I had room for improvement.

The following junior nationals, I competed in quiz bowl, essay contests, and prepared public speaking contests, to improve my knowledge of the Angus industry and to boost my confidence speaking in front of a crowd. Did I end up winning awards in these contests? Sometimes I did. But what is more important than the awards, have been the skills I developed from these experiences that have me standing here today.

We are given so many opportunities in this association. It's almost impossible to wrap your head around, as well as challenging to take full advantage of these possibilities.

It is important to use these opportunities, for we are the next generation of Angus enthusiasts, and in charge of making the Angus industry **better** than what it already is.

As we look towards the future of the Angus industry, do we see perfection? Maybe or maybe not. Our cattle, our product, and ourselves, will never be entirely perfect. While it's important to keep striving for perfection, the key is to be better than you were yesterday and have a plan to be better tomorrow than you are today. It is important to **believe in better**, but to accomplish this we need to do better.

From this I encourage you to look at your cattle, your product, and yourself, and find a way to make your tomorrow better than you are today. If each of us do this and continue to do so, the possibilities for our industry are endless. And the business breed will become a bigger empire than it already is. Thank you.

— Madison Weaver



Editor's note: Speeches presented in person may read slightly different than what is printed here. Submitted by Madison Weaver.

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