

TALK OF THE TOWN

For the newest Miss American Angus, serving is about establishing relationships with Angus members across the country rather than the recognition.

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

2021 MISS AMERICAN ANGUS ELLIE KIDWELL

The black hides of cattle, groomed to perfection, gleam as they are led in a circular parade in the arena. A competitive spirit brightens the eyes of the children at the opposite ends of their leads. The man in the center of the ring adjusts his cowboy hat, surveying the marching pairs as they waltz past him.

But it's not the placings of the cattle show that hold the true attention of the newest young lady to don the iconic red jacket, sash and crown. For Ellie Kidwell, 2021 Miss American Angus, the real excitement of this cattle show is in the crowd — the individuals gathered in and around the ring who are just waiting for the chance to connect with her.

Contestants for the 2021 title included Kidwell; Mattie Harward, Richfield, N.C.; Lauren Gilbert, Oldfield, Mo.; Emma Nowotny, New Braunfels, Texas; and Kady Figge, Onaga, Kan. The five competed via a written quiz, an interview and a prepared speech before a panel of three judges. Kidwell was crowned Nov. 10 during the 137th Angus Annual Meeting.

Making connections

"I want to meet as many people as possible," the 18-year-old says. "I want people to see my face and hear my story. I want to make those industry connections."



For the Walhonding, Ohio, native, the best part of the Angus family is being put into contact with a never-ending supply of like-minded people. Kidwell grew up in a family of cattle people, but found her own love for the industry when she was 8 years old.

After purchasing her first heifer from her grandfather, Kidwell was drawn to the show ring. It was not until five years ago, however, she found her passion for the Angus breed. Attending her first Eastern Regionals, Kidwell said her heifer won her class, and she was hooked.

"I was so excited, and ever since

then, I've been building on that," Kidwell explains.

The following year she went to her first National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference.

"All that time I was meeting all these new people and making all these new friends. It's something I love to do — I love to meet new people and see their perspective of the Angus industry," Kidwell adds.

Nowadays, the Angus industry is considered a family affair for the Kidwells. The solitary show heifer of 2010 has grown into a herd of 30 registered females Kidwell owns with her sister.

As Kidwell continued to dive into the Business Breed and the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), there was a single figure she often found herself drawn towards. From the bright red coat to the smile always gracing the individual's face, Kidwell says she was constantly intrigued by Miss American Angus.

"Growing over the years, I've seen Miss American Angus and thought the role was really something that I aspired to be," she says. "She's an amazing professional in the industry who represents the breed in a really unique way, interacting with others while wearing the crown and sash."

The first memories Kidwell has of the iconic figure were during Kallie

Knott's service. Kidwell says in and out of the jacket, Knott was someone she respected and admired. From Knott's interactions with fellow NJAA members to her time speaking to the parents lined up around the side of the show ring, Kidwell says Knott was one of the reasons she was drawn towards the thought of serving in the red jacket.

Writing her own story

Kidwell says there was no specific moment where she decided it was time to toss her hat in for the running of Miss American Angus. In her mind, she says she always had aspirations of filling the role, and things aligned perfectly for her to run for the title this year.

During her journey to the crown, Kidwell kept her eye on the chance to represent the Angus breed in the red coat. She says she loves nothing more than meeting new people and exchanging both stories and experiences with them, making the title of Miss American Angus an ideal way to give back to the breed that helped build her.

"A huge part of Miss American Angus is being a role model, in and out of the ring, for juniors and other members," she explains. "The sash across your chest makes you a representative of the Angus breed."

After being crowned at the 137th Angus Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 8, Kidwell began her time wearing that sash. Already she says she has found opportunities to meet new people and connect with their Angus story. In addition to the opportunity to speak with numerous Angus families, Kidwell says she knows serving in this role will be a learning experience. She has hopes of growing as an individual while wearing her crown and discovering



Candidates for 2021 Miss American Angus are (from left) Mattie Harward, Richfield, N.C.; Ellie Kidwell, Walhonding, Ohio; Lauren Gilbert, Oldfield, Mo.; Emma Nowotney, New Braunfels, Texas; and Kady Figge, Onaga, Kan.

THE WINNING SPEECH: DEVELOPING TRUST

Since the day we were born, we have been building countless relationships in the world around us. From our pets to our family to the companies we buy from, we are forming new connections every day. Good relationships are often mutually beneficial, and any positive relationship needs a certain amount of trust to be worthwhile. Without trust, no relationship can thrive. But what establishes trust in a relationship? Today, people are more cautious than ever. You don't automatically rely on a random stranger for no reason. Trust can be developed in many ways, and the Angus breed has been truly successful at this.

Many would agree that the Angus breed has a certain aura of trust that surrounds it. This is because it is backed by so many reliable programs, partners and people. However, this trust wasn't developed overnight. Angus cattle have a deep-rooted history and generations of hardworking individuals that have sought to further the breed. The first Angus cattle were brought to the U.S. in 1873. George Grant imported just four Angus bulls from Scotland to Victoria, Kansas, to breed with his Texas Longhorns. In the fiscal year of 2019, just over 304,000 head were registered through the American Angus Association. That's pretty impressive when you consider that this only accounts for individuals actually registered as purebreds and doesn't include the millions of commercial cattle raised each year that are influenced by Angus genetics. Commercial producers have turned to Angus cattle to improve the maternal, carcass and production traits in their herds. The trust they have developed in Angus genetics has made them an essential part of the industry. The Angus breed has grown to be the most popular in the U.S. thanks to the advantageous genetic traits breeders have grown to trust.

However history alone didn't establish Angus as the business breed it is today. The tremendous growth of Angus cattle has been facilitated by the many programs founded over the years that have pushed improvement in the breed. Programs such as *Certified Angus Beef*[®], AngusLinkSM and tools like EPDs (expected progeny differences) have allowed breeders and producers to work in their own herds on improving the value of their animals in their market through their selection of superior Angus genetics. This then enables them to provide a better product for their customers, whether that be feedlot producers, a customer seeking valuable registered genetics or someone wanting high-quality commercial replacement heifers. This in turn creates a more highly valued, trusting relationship between producers, their customers and the Angus breed.

One of the major programs that has shed light onto superior Angus quality and incentivized producers is the *Certified Angus Beef* brand. *Certified Angus Beef* ensures

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new ways she can serve the Angus breed and NJAA members.

While this upcoming year might be altered due to circumstances outside of her control, Kidwell says she will let nothing stop her from making industry connections as Miss American Angus.

“I want to meet as many people as possible. I know that’ll be difficult this year, but it’s still my goal,” she says. “I want people to see my face and hear my story. I don’t know how this next year is going to turn out, but I’m so excited for this experience.”

Kidwell’s time wearing the crown will be spent balancing moments representing the Angus breed with her dedication to furthering her education. Kidwell is currently attending Kansas State University (K-State), where she is pursuing a degree in animal science with a minor in business.

After college, Kidwell has hopes of attending veterinary school and specializing as a large animal chiropractor. No matter where life takes her, Kidwell says she will always consider the Angus industry home. She believes her time as Miss American Angus is just the start of her journey serving as a representative for the Business Breed.

a higher-quality, more consistent product to its customers by requiring beef carcasses to meet 10 specifications to qualify. Qualified carcasses receive premiums, making them more valuable for producers, who then put greater emphasis on Angus influence in their programs. The *Certified Angus Beef* brand establishes trust with beef consumers through their high-quality products which creates an overall positive, reliable image for Angus beef products.

AngusLink is a newer program that is utilized by feeder calf producers. AngusLink is a USDA Process Verified Program that has several different subprograms within it. These subentities, such as ones that verify age, Angus genetics and hormone usage, are used by feeder calf producers to enhance the marketability of their calves. Strategies like *Certified Angus Beef* and AngusLink are just two examples of the many ways that trust has been developed between the beef cattle market and the Angus breed, paving the way for its growing popularity. They have helped Angus cattle producers develop trust in their markets and have created a reputation for the Angus breed that will stand strong for generations to come.

Still, the long-established trust in Angus cattle has been passed from generation to generation on a much smaller scale than industry wide. From a young age, many Angus enthusiasts become involved in activities within their state and national breed associations. The National Junior Angus Association is filled with so many young people who are passionate about Angus, so it’s no wonder parents and grandparents get their kids involved in such an amazing breed association. On a personal note, I am no stranger to this situation as I purchased my first Angus heifer from my grandpa in 2010. I have watched myself grow from a shy, uninvolved member, to a junior who wants to be involved in anything and everything. I know I can safely say my love for Angus cattle has gotten me to where I am today, and I am a better person because of it. It’s easy to see why getting the next generation hooked on Angus is no problem at all. Kids learn early on about all that the National Junior Angus Association has to offer. From trusting in the junior board to trusting in their own cattle, Angus juniors establish trust in the Angus breed that will grow throughout their lifetime and as they spread their passion with others. As a junior member, I know the hard work and long hours that go into our cattle and the rewards that come from this, but sharing that passion and being able to trust in such a great breed that has stood the test of time is what makes Angus cattle truly special to me. Thank you.

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