



The 2024 candidates for Miss American Angus were Alyson Friesen (from left), Arnett, Okla.; Ava Leibfried, Hazel Green, Wis.; Eliza Patchin, Mitchellville, Iowa; Kady Vejraska, Omak, Wash.; and Lauren Wolter, Aviston, Ill.

A DOUBLE CROSS RING

Lauren Wolter crowned the 2023 Miss American Angus.

by Megan Silveira, associate editor

The Florida sun was bright, streaming through the windows to touch the shoulders of mother and daughter as the pair huddled close together. In Lauren Wolter's mind, the hardest part was over. She had received the nomination of the Illinois Junior Angus Association in the summer of 2023, and standing in the hallways of the Rosen Shingle Creek Convention Center in Orlando, all she let herself feel was excitement.

There was a deep desire to don the red coat of Miss American Angus, but Wolter says she left the ultimate decision in the hands of someone much greater.

"I've actually kind of surprised myself with how much I've been able to keep myself calm," she admits, "but I pretty much approached this with the whole concept that if this is where God wanted to use me, I would end up in this position. And if it wasn't, then He had other plans for me."

Back in November, as they had a moment before the 2023 Angus Convention had even started, Wolter's mom, Kimberly, gifted her a double cross ring. The bauble was meant to bolster confidence, but as Lauren slid it onto her finger, she told herself it would be a constant addition to her uniform if she was crowned.

While Kimberly says she and her husband, Bradley, couldn't stop smiling after Lauren's name was announced on the main stage, their true excitement comes from the person Lauren is becoming.

Watching their daughter leave for Kansas State University and learn to walk through life with the Lord was a big moment for the parental duo. Now as the 18-year-old takes on a new leadership role,



Lauren Wolter

Kimberly says she knows Lauren will do her best to represent her state and the breed, while serving as a beacon to her National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) peers.

An Angus journey

"She was a strong-willed, independent child," Kimberly says of her daughter's youth. "And she

continues to be a strong-willed, independent child.”

Driven, detail-oriented, self-starter — all adjectives that follow Lauren’s name. But Bradley says she’s also been dedicated to Angus for as long as he can remember.

“Early on, she was introduced to the Angus Association in the youth program by some friends,” he recalls. “That has served as her single greatest source of inspiration, mentorship, development. It has been phenomenal, absolutely front and center for her.”

Lauren attended her first National Junior Angus Show in 2015, bringing home a portfolio as a prize from one of the many contests she had participated in. Tucked away in the privacy of her childhood bedroom, 10-year-old Lauren made a list. On a sheet of the portfolio’s lined paper, the ambitious junior wrote down everything she wanted to do during her time in the NJAA.

Mentors like Keegan Cassady and Maddie Butler-Mosiman inspired Lauren to add Miss American Angus to the lineup. Despite the goal living on the list for the past eight years, Kimberly says she and Bradley weren’t informed of the plan until it came time to start applying for scholarships.

“This one was a surprise to me,” Kimberly admits.

After Lauren secured the American Angus Auxiliary scholarship, the first step to qualifying to compete for Miss American Angus, the junior says she let excitement take over the nerves.

Competitive at heart, the lineup of activities in Orlando didn’t scare Lauren. The speech and impromptu questions were areas she had prepared for the most and

THE WINNING SPEECH: *A Servant Leader*

It was foggy, cold and completely dark outside. At 6 a.m., my dad and I climbed into the truck to deliver a bull. I thought to myself, “You know what I need? A large cup of coffee.”

My dad on the other hand, already several cups deep, was on a completely different wavelength as he proceeded to turn on none other than *The John Maxwell Leadership Podcast*.

Perfect start to the morning!

Several things have changed since that fateful bull delivery years ago. I am now a morning person and fan of *The John Maxwell Leadership Podcast*. But a few things remain constant, too, like my passion for Angus cattle and my desire to serve others to the best of my ability.

Servant leadership — it’s one thing the Angus breed, John Maxwell and I can all agree on. John Maxwell himself declares, “The measure of a leader is not the number of people who serve him, but the number of people he serves.”

Serving more than 25,000 members, the American Angus Association is already embodying the servant-leader mindset. But how can I serve others? How do I make a difference?

Answering these questions sounds like a daunting task, if you ask me. Thankfully, I have been brought up in the Angus family, an environment that has taught me what it means to live by a set of values, use them to guide your principles, and, above all else, be an individual of great character.

In my mind, leading in our world today is simply a function of three I’s: integrity, inspiration and initiative.

As a section FFA officer in high school, one of my duties was facilitating chapter visits. Part of our activity was creating little credit-card sized pieces of paper, called goal cards. These slips asked the students what their core values and goals were. During this activity I was able to identify that my own core value is integrity.

It’s a value I have seen demonstrated every time my family stands behind a bull we have sold, and it’s one that I believe Certified Angus Beef (CAB) is a prime example of. They demonstrate how the value of integrity can foster success. Many might ask, “Does a black hide really make all that much difference in meat quality?” and the simple answer would be no.

CAB did not become the highly respected, reputable brand it is today by simply providing the consumer with Angus beef. No, CAB is successful because it promises that every bite will be delicious, and as a company they have the integrity to deliver on this promise to the consumer. Sure, CAB is pretty tasty, but taste alone doesn’t generate over a billion pounds of beef sales. Integrity does.

The second I — Inspiration. Our ability to inspire is one of my favorite qualities of the Angus family. I could stand up here today and run through my list of every person within the Angus breed that has ever inspired me, but we might be here all day long.

If we are going to talk about inspiration, I would be remiss to leave out George Grant. Now there is a

man who has been able to serve the world. In just five short years of life following the delivery of the Angus bulls, Grant was able to lay a foundation for a breed founded on innovation. Like all great leaders do, Grant saw adversity during his time, but he persevered knowing his four bulls would have the ability to impact the industry on a global level. One-hundred and fifty years later, Grant is still serving the world.

Integrity and inspiration are two values I have been raised to live by, not only by my parents, but by my Angus family as a whole. We show up when it matters, we lift each other up, and we push each other to be better. My first week of college made me appreciate this more than ever before. When my mom and I were moving into my dorm, our personal struggle with patience led to a much deeper struggle to loft my bed.

With just a few texts, former Miss American Angus Esther Tarpoff was at my door with a rubber mallet and a lunch invitation. That same week, as my family dealt with my grandpa’s cancer battle, countless members of our Angus family reached out with expressions of sympathy and hope. Friends and fellow breeders from states away attended the funeral, showing me what it means to be there when it matters.

When it comes to the third and final I, initiative, I am a firm believer that Angus does a better job of investing in the future than any other organization. The mission of the Angus Foundation is one of servitude in itself: youth, education and research. Through conferences, educational seminars like Angus University, and fundraising initiatives like Fund the Future, Angus has set itself up to continue serving in the future. We understand that the best way we can successfully lead in our world today is by taking the initiative to develop the leaders of tomorrow.

As much as I love attending LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) and Raising the Bar every year, I recognize that simply sitting in leadership workshops isn’t truly where my leadership was born. Rather, it is the opportunity to surround myself with like-minded individuals. People who also desire to leave an impact on the world like George Grant and serve others as effectively as our Association does.

As Angus breeders we embody what it means to be a servant leader. We all have our own set of values; our operations follow a set of principles; and as an Angus family, we are constantly pushing each other to take initiative and be better.

I’ll conclude with another quote of John Maxwell’s: “Everything you want to accomplish as a leader ultimately hinges on the people you have around you.”

I could not be more thankful for the Angus family surrounding me. Looking around this room, there are so many faces in here that have offered advice, served as a listening ear or simply been a role model in my life. You all have shown me what it means to live with integrity, work to inspire others and always take initiative. Thank you for showing me how to be a servant leader.

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where she had pulled in the most help.

Her roommates back in Manhattan, Kan., had been a willing and eager audience as she perfected the presentation, offering tidbits of advice on phrasing or tone.

“I’ve always been really passionate about public speaking,” Lauren says, noting the hours she spent writing and rewriting lines.

Knowing their daughter as a bit of a perfectionist, Kimberly and Bradley tried to help keep Lauren relaxed in Florida.

“No award ever defines who you are as a person,” Kimberly kept reminding the family. “Your character and your integrity is what’s most important.”

Watching his daughter compete was enjoyable, as the process gave him a moment to realize just how blessed he was to raise his children in the beef industry.

“This business, the people that own assets in this business, are thinking about the next generation,” he explains. “They’re just so supportive of young people, and that’s so different

from most other industries that are really, really focused on the here and now. The Association is just so focused on the future. The point is, I really enjoyed getting to know people this week that have been in this for her.”

It takes a village to raise a budding cattlemoan, Kimberly says, and the week at Angus Convention showcased to the entire Wolter family just how strong their village is.

“I think for me, the most valuable part of this experience has just been recognizing how many people I have in my corner,” Lauren adds. “I’m just so very thankful for the people that I have in my life and genuine friends that I know are here to support me and encourage me.”

When her name was announced Nov. 5, Lauren says her jaw dropped open so wide “you could probably fit a whole donut inside.” Feeling the weight of the crown for the first time, however, wasn’t Lauren’s favorite memory.

No, the moment she treasurers most happened in the quiet of backstage, prior to being named



Miss American Angus.

Lauren Wolter’s favorite moment happened when she joined her hands with her four competitors — four girls she hadn’t known prior to arriving in Florida.

“We were chatting about nerves and cracking jokes, and one of the girls was like, ‘Oh, I just feel like I need to pray,’ and I said, ‘Let’s do it,’” she explains. “I feel like we built a pretty good friendship over the week, but that was really just a solidifying moment. It was special.”

Following the united “amen,” the girls agreed to a group hug, no matter who was crowned. Then when her double-cross glinted in the spotlight as she stepped forward to be crowned, Lauren knew the faith she had kept all week was well-placed. **AJ**

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