

Janelle Sommers Leads by Example

Good luck with your Angus and all that you do!

Thanks for opening my eyes to Angus.

These are just a couple of phrases that can be found written in Janelle Sommers' high school yearbook. "Everybody knows I have

Angus cattle, and it's not just because I had pictures of them in my locker. It's because I promote Angus cattle every chance I get," says this vibrant young Angus breeder from Silver Lake, Ind., who will turn 19 on Feb. 17.

In addition to promoting Angus beef locally, Janelle has been able to serve members of the Indiana Junior Angus Association (IJAA) in various

offices over the past few years. As an IJAA director from 1987 to 1993, she represented the Northeast area of her state by sending pictures and newspaper articles of members to the IJAA reporter. In her role as IJAA secretary and second vice president, she not only fulfilled the requirements of those offices, but strove to find unique money-making ideas to raise funds for her state's bid for the

National Junior Angus Show.

This past year Janelle served as first vice president of IJAA. "This was a time-consuming role because my duties included being membership chairman and sending out membership information to all eligible past IJAA members as well as to prospective members," she says.

To lead by example

"I hope younger members will strive to accomplish their goals by seeing me set and achieve mine," Janelle says.

Participating in the National Junior Angus Show and in NJAA contests such as public speaking, poster, photography and the computer cow-calf game has given Janelle plenty of experience and made her a respected role model for younger members. She has worked hard to earn her NJAA



Janelle Sommers, Silver Lake, Ind., (center), was presented the 1996 NJAA Outstanding Leadership Award in Louisville, Ky., last November. The award, given in memory of Barbara Smalstig, is designed to recognize one outstanding NJAA member each year. Presenting the award are Fred Smalstig, Naples, Fla., and Jennifer Hawkins, NJAA leadership chair, Mason, Mich.

Bronze and Silver Pin awards and is now striving for the Gold Pin. Yet another accomplishment has been to enroll her cow herd in the Angus Herd Improvement Records program.

"I encourage all juniors to participate in these programs so they can gain similar experiences which will prepare them for the future," she says.

"Janelle is a natural to promote the Angus breed. She generously spreads her sunshine smile, knowledge and love of Angus cattle all over Indiana."

To learn by doing

Janelle has participated in LEAD conferences with the goal to not only share her knowledge and experiences, but also to gain ideas from other NJAA members.

"I've come back to my own state organization with new, energizing ideas which will only make the IJAA and its members stronger," Janelle says. "At the LEAD conferences I was able to learn more about the Angus industry and how I can more effectively promote Angus cattle."

Recruiting new members to the NJAA and IJAA is one of Janelle's favorite activities and

one she works on every chance she gets.

"In doing this, I use myself as an example," she says. "Had it not been for the life skills and confidence I've gained through my involvement in the Angus community and other organizations, I would not be the person that I am today. I might still be that shy girl who could not take on a challenge or step out of her comfort zone."

Life lessons

A fourth generation Angus breeder, Janelle has developed life skills such as responsibility, discipline, patience, poise and persistence. She's had the opportunity to travel across the nation and to meet many other Angus breeders.

"The friendships I've gained, the memories I hold, and the lessons I've learned are priceless," she says. "Whether I'm conducting a beef promotion at the grocery store, attending a LEAD conference, working the show ring as Miss Indiana Angus Queen, or talking to breeders about EPDs, breeding and feeding, I'm learning and growing."

Janelle believes Angus cattle have provided her a way to mentor to and serve others. She has witnessed the personal growth and confidence of two neighbor boys, Andy and Chad, since her family introduced them to 4-H beef projects.

"Both boys are working to overcome obstacles in their lives that most of us don't have to face," Janelle explains. "It gives me great joy to see them grow and learn."

Chad and Andy aren't the only ones Janelle and her family have helped get involved with Angus and NJAA. They jump at the chance to make new members feel welcome, to lend a hand or instruct younger exhibitors on proper cattle fitting, showmanship techniques or animal care.

Janelle's resume of service

- Distributed Angus beef samples at local grocery stores and set up beef promotion booths which contained educational material on beef by-products, cuts of beef, the Certified Angus Beef Program and other related topics.
- Promoted local, state and national Angus activities and programs to other breeders and exhibitors.
- Offered and provided rides to meetings and other Angus events to fellow IJAA members who live in her county.
- Assisted others in starting Angus cattle projects by explaining and demonstrating proper feeding, maintenance and fitting techniques.
- Shared Angus information with prospective buyers and provided membership applications to prospective IJAA and NJAA members.
- Created and coordinated fundraisers for IJAA and NJAA programs.
- Served on Atlantic National Junior Show Committee.
- Represented Indiana as an NJAA Board election voting delegate.
- Served as a representative in the Silver Lake, Ind., Community Systemwide Response program. Janelle shared her perspective on issues facing the community to its leaders and spoke on the positives of 4-H and Junior Leader's community service projects.
- At a Northern Indiana Education Summit, she spoke to more than 180 business people, community leaders and school administrators about youth and adult partnerships. This speech was featured in a local newspaper and shared by her sister, Jill, in an *Angus Journal* "Postcard from an NJAA Director" column.



Janelle's strong sense of family, leadership and guidance comes from her parents, Dick and Sharon Sommers, and sister Jill, who have also been active in the state and national Angus organizations.

"Janelle has always had the ability to set a goal, find effective ways to attain that goal and reach it," says Pam Snepp, an advisor for the Indiana Junior Angus Association. "She doesn't take the easy way, or do it by

herself, she involves younger or less experienced members to help them gain the confidence to succeed as a leader."

Editor's note:

For an application, rules and further information on the NJAA Outstanding Leadership Award program, contact James Fisher, director of junior activities, American Angus Association, (816) 233-3101.

