

Each year 12 members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) become highly visible as they slip into their green jackets and take leadership responsibilities at various events across the country. These 12 young people are elected by the NJAA membership to serve two-year terms on the NJAA Board of Directors.

Six of the directors are winding down their terms on the junior Board. They have been wearing their green jackets at Angus functions since they were elected in Des Moines, Iowa, during the 2000 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). Tom Patterson, Columbus, Mont., is chairman; Ryan Sweeney, Mason, Mich., vice chairman; Heath Johnson, Corinth, Miss., communications director; Christy Walther, Mount Crawford, Va., Foundation director; Brittney Burns, Kickapoo, Ill., leadership director; and Jessica Sawyer, Bassett, Neb., membership director.

Those serving their first year on the board are Mercedes Danekas, Wilton, Calif.; Brian Howell, Union City, Ind.; Lana Myers, Jennings, La.; John McCurry, Burrton, Kan.; Lacey Robinson, Montgomery City, Mo.; and Brandon Walker, Lexington, Ga.



Green Jackets Bring Responsibility

by *Shelia Stannard*

Different routes

Wearing the coveted green jacket is a dream that some of the officers of the junior Board have had throughout their careers. Others decided they would someday wear the green jacket after meeting previous junior Board members.

"I saw these mysterious people in green jackets and was curious to find out more

about them," says Johnson, who attended his first NJAS in 1995 in Louisville, Ky. "Suzanne Berry, a Board member from Alabama, spent just a few minutes talking to me. It really made me feel included in the NJAA, and I wanted to have the same opportunity to influence the lives of young people."

"The people who wore the green jackets were leaders, friends and role models who

made a huge difference in my life," Patterson says. "I remember when Jarrod Gillig was on the Board. He stopped to talk to me for 10 minutes. I'll never forget that."

Sweeney says other junior Board members from his state association encouraged him to become more involved in Angus activities. "Lisa Hawkins was on

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► Above: NJAA Board members for 2001-2002 include (top row, from left) Heath Johnson, Corinth, Miss., communications director; Brandon Walker, Lexington, Ga.; Brian Howell, Union City, Ind.; Tom Patterson, Columbus, Mont., chairman; John McCurry, Burrton, Kan.; Ryan Sweeney, Mason, Mich., vice chairman; (bottom row, from left) Brittney Burns, Kickapoo, Ill., leadership director; Lana Myers, Jennings, La.; Jessica Sawyer, Bassett, Neb., membership director; Christy Walther, Mount Crawford, Va., Foundation director; Lacey Robinson, Montgomery City, Mo.; and Mercedes Danekas, Wilton, Calif.



► Jessica Sawyer, NJAA membership director, assists James Fisher, American Angus Association director of activities and junior activities, in organizing the contest sign-up at the 2001 NJAS in Denver, Colo.

“You need to be knowledgeable about how state associations are run, about the NJAA programs and the beef industry. You should be approachable and willing to work with juniors and adults.”

— Jessica Sawyer

“We must challenge junior members to become the best they can be by encouraging involvement in all the programs and opportunities the NJAA offers.”

— Tom Patterson

► Tom Patterson, NJAA chairman, reports to the American Angus Association Board of Directors at the February Board Meeting in Saint Joseph, Mo.



“I hope I have helped make a difference in the life of one or many junior Angus members.”

— Christy Walther



► Christy Walther, NJAA Foundation director, gives junior activities intern Clint Brown a dance lesson at the 2001 LEAD Conference.



the NJAA Board when I exhibited at my first NJAS,” he recalls. “It was the first year for the team sales contest, and she really encouraged members from our state to participate. Later, her sister, Jennifer, served on the Board. Jennifer and I traveled together to the NJAS from 1991 through the end of her show career in 1997, and she always challenged me to take on responsibility and serve as a leader within our association.”

Walther says she was instructed to follow the command of those wearing the green jacket at her first show, and her decision to run for the Board developed from that time forward.

“I was assured and comforted by the person in that green jacket,” she says, adding that the Board member helped her to focus more on exhibiting her heifer and less on being nervous. “Every time I saw the green jackets they seemed to be great leaders who made the junior events fun for everyone.”

Responsibility

Being elected to serve on the Board for two years is a responsibility that is not taken lightly. These 12 individuals represent the 11,000 members of the NJAA, and they make decisions that affect the membership.

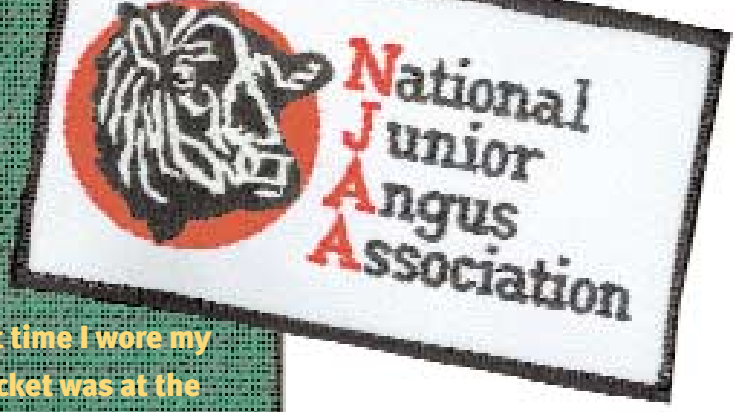
“Wearing the green jacket means bearing responsibilities a lot of people don’t even realize,” Burns says. “As a director, I attend all the shows and meetings as assigned. As leadership director, I am currently planning LEAD (the Leaders

Engaged in Angus Development Conference) in Sacramento. However, the biggest responsibility is portraying a positive image around junior members at all times.”

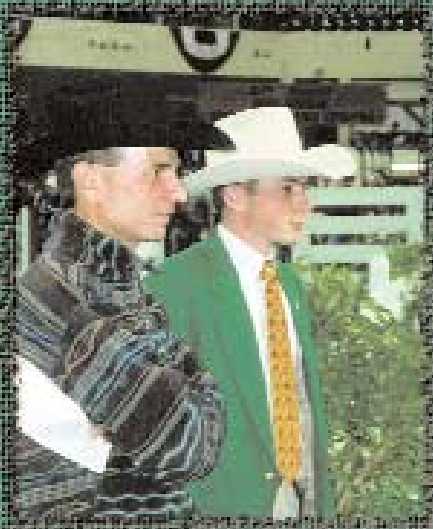
Sawyer adds to the list of responsibilities that junior Board members should take. “You need to be knowledgeable about how state associations are run, about the NJAA programs and the beef industry. You should be approachable and willing to work with juniors and adults.”

“We must challenge junior members to become the best they can be by encouraging involvement in all the programs and opportunities the NJAA offers,” Patterson says.

Most Board members are winding down



Green Jackets CONTINUED FROM PAGE 58



► Ryan Sweeney, NJAA vice chairman, assists regional manager David Gazda in working the ring at the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Ky.

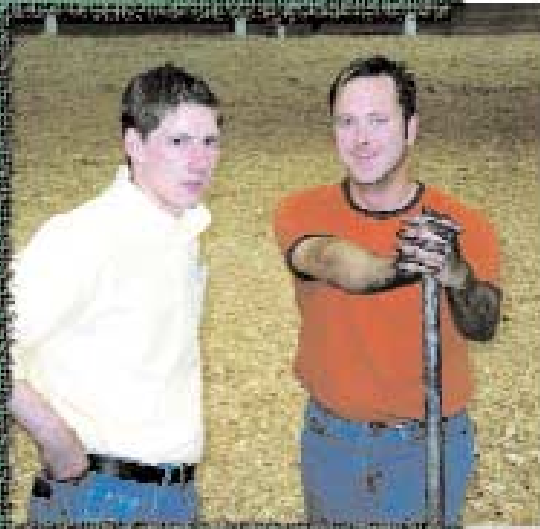
“The first time I wore my green jacket was at the 2000 National FFA Convention in Louisville. Christy and I really stood out in the sea of blue jackets, and I was proud to be representing the NJAA.”

— Ryan Sweeney

“The green jacket is a symbol to me every time I wear it of honor and pride because of the tradition that it represents.”

— Heath Johnson

► Heath Johnson, left, NJAA communications director, takes a break with his uncle, Mark Johnson, while setting up for the 2001 Eastern Regional Junior Angus Show in Tupelo, Miss.



“Wearing the green jacket means bearing responsibilities a lot of people don’t even realize.”

— Brittney Burns



► Brittney Burns, NJAA leadership director, helps golfers check in at the 2001 Angus Foundation Golf Tournament during the National Junior Angus Show.

their junior careers as they approach or pass their 21st birthday. Their time on the Board has given them the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

“I hope I have helped make a difference in the life of one or many junior Angus members,” Walther says. “I think of the members’ interests when planning events, and I think of the juniors’ safety and experience in the showing. It is very satisfying to have parents express their appreciation for helping their child.”

The first time

Although their time of wearing the green jackets is coming to an end, these Board members will likely never forget the first time he or she wore the jacket.

“I was surprised that they actually gave me one of my own,” Sawyer recalls. “It created butterflies in my stomach. The first time I wore my jacket at an event, I was surprised how much attention was brought to it and how noticeable it was.”

“The first time I wore my green jacket was at the 2000 National FFA Convention in Louisville,” Sweeney remembers. “Christy and I really stood out in the sea of blue jackets, and I was proud to be representing the NJAA.”

Burns, like many other Board members, says she remembers thinking that matching clothes with her jacket would be a challenging task. However, the pride she felt masked any fashion decisions she had to make. “The first time I wore it, I felt extremely humbled to be part of such a prestigious group of people.”

Johnson summarizes the feelings of many who are elected to the Board and given the honor and responsibility of wearing the green jacket.

“The green jacket is a symbol to me every time I wear it of honor and pride because of the tradition that it represents,” he says. “I never thought that I would have the opportunity to wear the green jacket, and I will treasure this experience forever.”

