

DIVING IN



Junior Angus members jump at the opportunity to start their own businesses and swim to success with skills given to them by their involvement in the National Junior Angus Association.

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

How do people learn to swim? Do they gradually lower themselves into the pool, conquering the depths one step at a time? Or do they jump directly into the deep end, tackling their fears with the support of floaties until they are capable of swimming on their own?

The idea of jumping in without fear when learning to swim can be applied outside of the concrete walls of a pool. Whether it's exploring a newfound hobby or holding a new position in the workplace, the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) is assisting its members in finding the confidence needed to dive into the business world headfirst.

“With the Angus industry being the Business Breed, I think they focus a lot in the NJAA on developing kids to be leaders who are successful in life and the workplace,” says Whitney Walker, 19-year-old NJAA member from Prairie Grove, Ark.

Walker has been around cattle and involved in the

NJAA for the past nine years, and says the Association truly changed her for the better. Walker says her involvement with the NJAA played a major role in helping her start her own business.

Walker opened her online boutique, Ranch City Boutique, last July. She says this opportunity has given her a way to work on her own terms while both continuing to show and furthering her education at Oklahoma State University.

But Walker isn't the only NJAA member who gained enough confidence from exhibiting Angus cattle to start her own business. Taylor Kelner, 15-year-old Bradley, Ark., native, has also found herself achieving the title of "entrepreneur" at a young age.

Kelner became involved in the Angus industry five years ago and, quickly finding her voice as a young agriculturalist, founded Rome 1 Ranch Photography and Designs, a company offering photography and graphic design services.

"Livestock is my passion," she says. "I ordered a camera last March, and I thought I was just going to see what happened." What started out as a hobby quickly became much more, she adds.

Through her involvement in the NJAA, Kelner says she learned the value of seizing every opportunity presented to her and has watched how that same lesson allowed her business to flourish.

Both of these young women have built a future for themselves, and say the NJAA helped them pave this path of success.

SINKING OR SWIMMING

"I know what it takes, and what I have to put out there to be successful," Kelner says. "It was really just a sink-or-swim kind of deal."

Kelner says one of the scariest parts about starting her own business was actually getting started. While she says she has plenty of self-confidence, Kelner admits it was intimidating to broadcast her photography and design services to the public.

Walker also says she found herself nervous about the initial steps to opening a business. Despite always having a love for fashion, Walker says it takes a lot of

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Whitney Walker balances her time running an online boutique with her career as a member of the National Junior Angus Association.

drive and courage to open a boutique. It was her experience as an NJAA member that gave her the ability to push herself into the deep end.

“Being involved with cattle taught me to face intimidation head on,” she says. “The more you involve yourself in the industry, the less intimidating new things become.”

Walker says her career in the show ring gave her the courage to jump into her business headfirst. Similar to showing cattle, the longer Walker says she was running her business, the more confidence she gained in herself and her ability to operate her online boutique.

Kelner says she first learned about the power of having a passion for something when she started breeding Angus cattle. Having a love for the work she does allows her to get up and face her challenges head-on, she adds.

To other young entrepreneurs, in and out of the Angus industry, Kelner stresses the importance of just starting. She says the key is to believe in your work and what you stand for.

“Jump in,” she says. “Just do it and try. It’s better to try than to look back and have regrets.”

TREADING WATER

Once the initial jump into the business world has been made, Kelner says the support of the

Angus family helps keep young entrepreneurs afloat. She says the NJAA and the Association constantly reassure her of her talents as both a cattlegirl and business owner.

“It’s not like I’m just another junior in the association,” she says.

In addition to the moral support the Angus family offers, Walker says her time in the NJAA cultivated valuable life skills she otherwise would not have access to. All cattle exhibitors learn the importance of communication, but Walker says she found the most value in the economic lessons she learned while showing.

“You learn the value of a dollar, and how to utilize funds when you’re in the cattle business,” Walker says. “There’s skills you’re not always taught in school that the cattle industry provides. Those are important lessons you can apply to your own business.”

Time management is another skill expected of business owners, and Kelner credits her ability to balance school, showing and running her business with the time management skills she has developed as an NJAA member.

Starting your own business takes courage and skill, Kelner says. She says while managing an operation is a challenge, it is also extremely rewarding. She says she feels blessed to get to live out her passion and make an



Taylor Kelner gained skills such as time management and self-confidence because of her time exhibiting Angus cattle.

income she can later put to use in both furthering her education and helping her succeed as a young adult in the workforce.

Both Kelner and Walker admit they would not have dove into the world of business ownership or found success if they had not grown up in the Angus industry. While learning to swim on your own is

not easy, the skills young Angus breeders cultivate through NJAA events and shows teach them to tread water on their own.

Whether an up-and-coming Angus exhibitor dives in headfirst or employs the help of floaties, there is no doubt the NJAA is teaching its members to never be afraid to swim. **AJ**

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Five lessons from NJAA businesswomen

Support is everywhere. Whitney Walker says being a young entrepreneur requires a lot of self-confidence, and there will be moments when finding that extra boost is difficult. Luckily, Walker says support from friends, family and peers can be found everywhere.

“People truly want you to succeed, no matter how negative this world seems,” she says.

Don’t underestimate the power of social media. Both Walker and Kelner say social media has been responsible for a lot of growth in their respective businesses.

“Social media helps you broadcast your services,” Kelner says. “You can showcase what you have to offer.”

Walker encourages business owners to get creative and engage their audience. She says options like giveaways or contests on social media platforms can really grow a business’s following in a short amount of time.

Originality is key. Despite being young, Kelner says all business owners should strive to be leaders rather than followers.

Kelner says having mentors or asking for advice is a great step in bettering yourself as a business owner, but remember to stand on your own two feet.

“You’re competing in an adult world,” she says. “Create your own content and be original to play on that level.”

Profit isn’t everything. Being new to owning a business means the process of making a profit can be a lot of trial and error.

“You won’t always make a profit, and that’s okay,” Walker says.

When a new venture does not prove to be as successful as anticipated, Walker says all it takes is a moment of re-evaluation. Business models can be edited, and she says being open to new ideas can keep a business progressing.

It is worth it. Walker says the most important lesson is to never forget that starting a business venture is worth it for all young people. The process of getting started and then maintaining an operation is both time-consuming and stressful, but Walker says that should not deter young entrepreneurs from getting started.

“Invest in yourself through a business,” she says. “Starting a business is very rarely a bad decision.”