

# NJAA Spotlight

*NJAA member Ryan Callahan finds scholastic success at the Cattle Industry Convention.*

*by Megan Silveira, editorial intern*

A tall man and a 12-year-old boy walked hand in hand, each wearing cowboy hats, surrounded by the scuffle of worn boots and the gentle chatter of cattlemen at the annual Cattle Industry Convention & National Cattlemen's Beef Association Trade Show. Little did this 12-year-old know, he would be recognized at this same conference seven years later.

Now 19 years old, Ryan Callahan says he is "just as eager to be part of the cattle industry as he was when he was younger." A passionate and involved member of the Angus industry, Callahan is both proud and thankful to have been a recipient of the National Cattlemen's Foundation Scholarship.

This past February, Callahan received second place in the National Cattlemen's Foundation Scholarship at the NCBA conference. After an essay and a round of interviews, Callahan became one of five junior beef exhibitors recognized as scholarship recipients.

Callahan has represented the Angus industry since he started his cattle herd in 2007. He has grown it from four Angus heifers to the 125 head his family manages today.

"I grew up in a private school in the city," Callahan admits. "I learned how to be a good advocate for agriculture and promote the beef industry."

Callahan is thankful for his time spent around those unaware of the importance of agriculture because it



*An avid showman and Angus breeder, Ryan Callahan has been impacting the industry for the past 11 years.*

showed him the other side.

After beginning his career in the Angus industry, Callahan says he grew as an individual. Callahan admires Angus cattle for being self-sufficient, recognizing the breed's ability to be successful in so many areas of the beef industry.

Showing led Callahan to attend the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) for the past five summers, an event he believes allowed him to overcome his shyness. He loved the time spent at the national shows and admired the way the program helps turn

junior exhibitors into future leaders.

"I met people and learned values that are second to none," he says.

## Giving back

Callahan is thankful for the time he has spent in the Angus industry and the way it provides unique opportunities for exhibitors.

"I don't think there's any other industry quite like it," Callahan says.

Callahan has served in several leadership positions in the Angus industry, positions that pushed him out of his comfort zone. Callahan says he has loved serving as the president of the Oklahoma Junior Angus Association and can picture himself running for a spot on the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) next year.

Callahan has always admired members of the NJAB and commended the way they influenced him.

From the first time he attended a national show, he says these individuals have served as a source of inspiration to him.

"I love the idea of giving back to the industry that helped me grow," Callahan explains. "The way the board members live their lives both inside and out of the Angus industry is truly inspiring."

Callahan has the unique experience of looking up to his cousin Macy Perry, who served as a director and chairman on the NJAB for the past two years. Callahan says

he admires Perry for the impact she has had on his life, and she is one of the reasons he wants to run for a spot on the board.

“The most important thing to remember is that you never need a title to lead or serve,” Perry says. “Ryan has already served as a leader many times, since he has taken on many leadership roles in the Angus industry in the past.”

Perry is proud of Callahan’s accomplishments thus far, especially the scholarship he recently received. She admires the high levels of integrity and humility Callahan possesses and believes these traits help him achieve his goals.

## Finding balance

Callahan works to balance his passion for beef cattle with his desire to further his education. A freshman at Oklahoma State University (OSU), Callahan is earning his bachelor of science degree in animal science with a business option and an accounting minor.

Despite growing up in an area known for supporting the University of Oklahoma, Callahan always knew he wanted to be a Cowboy.

“Angus kids from all over come to OSU,” Callahan says. “The school brings everyone from across the country together, and that’s pretty unique.”

Some of Callahan’s extracurricular activities include the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, Oklahoma Collegiate Cattlemen, and Block and Bridle. Callahan says each of these organizations has pushed him to become more involved on campus and allowed him to recognize “the family vibe that makes OSU special.”

“Attending OSU has been so refreshing because I’m surrounded by people with the same interests and passions as me,” he says. “It sounds cliché, but there’s something extremely comforting about the

family vibe here on campus.”

Callahan is grateful to have met one of his best friends through these various campus activities: Alec Bailey, an agribusiness freshman at OSU. Bailey has also been involved in the Angus industry for the past five years, but met Callahan on campus.

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“In terms of people, those in the Angus industry are second to none,” Bailey says. “Ryan is no exception. He is going to be a force to be reckoned with in the cattle industry in the near future.”

Bailey labels Callahan as an outstanding cattleman and student. Callahan has set the goal of maintaining a 4.0 grade point average, a goal Bailey can easily see him achieving.

While Callahan is making the most of his four years as an undergraduate, he says he is also planning for the future.

Callahan is considering law school after graduation or finding a career in sales management. He plans on staying in the cattle industry, wherever where life takes him.

“I plan to promote agriculture and promote the Angus breed no matter what field I’m in,” Callahan said.

Both Perry and Bailey admire Callahan as a cattleman, acknowledging the dedication he has for the Angus industry. Both also say they were not surprised when they heard Callahan had won a National Cattlemen’s Foundation scholarship.

“From him as a person to a cattleman to a student, he checks all the boxes,” Bailey explains.

Bailey believes Callahan is one of the most deserving recipients for this scholarship, since he has an eye for cattle and is also able to understand and connect with people.


Callahan has big plans for himself and his future, crediting his ambitious goals to the Angus industry which has given him the confidence to aim high.

“The Angus world pushes you to actually follow those core beliefs that you claim to live by,” Callahan says, regarding the way the industry has influenced him.

Seven years ago, when Callahan attended the Cattle Industry Convention for the first time, he hid behind his father, shyly watching powerful cattlemen interact around him.

Callahan had no idea he would become one of these influential ranchers, positively impacting the lives of other junior exhibitors and his peers.

Callahan has grown into himself as a young man, crediting his progress to the Angus industry. He says it is thanks to the cattle and individuals involved with these animals he was able to receive the National Cattlemen’s Foundation scholarship and has been inspired to go on representing the Angus breed.

“I have a passion for agriculture and the Angus breed,” Callahan explains. He says the National Cattlemen’s Foundation scholarship is helping him reach his goals and pursue his dreams with his education and the cattle industry. 

*Editor’s note: Photo courtesy of Ryan Callahan.*