

Fittin'



Amidst the excitement, this family finds the National Junior Angus Show to be a fittin' time to bond and to help each other. For the Oursos, it's more than just a day in the life of a junior member; it's a lifetime of memories and dreams being fulfilled through involvement with Angus cattle.

Story & photos by **Corinne Blender**

► Evident at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) is the way families from across the nation bond with each other. Friends are viewed more like brothers or sisters, and younger junior members look up to the older ones.

The people of R&R Cattle Co., Keithville, La., have become extended family for Jennifer Ourso (right). Codi Greer (left), granddaughter of Richard and Susan Greer, has become like a little sister to Jennifer. Richard is co-owner of R&R Cattle Co. with Ron Springer, both of whom have become close family friends of the Oursos.

"Ron and Richard are, in a large part, two of the reasons I get to travel to many of the shows. They haul my cattle for me, and we all work together," Jennifer says.

► Jennifer represented her state as a voting delegate at the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Annual Meeting. It was her responsibility to get to know each candidate and to vote for the six who she thought would provide the strongest Board.

Times



► Besides showing heifers, Jennifer looks forward to competing in events such as extemporaneous speaking, public speaking, quiz bowl and team sales. Changing from a blackened shirt and jeans to a dress is never out of the question for Jennifer.

Jennifer's mother, Melanie, says she sees her daughter's desire to absorb all the knowledge that she can. She learns by listening and by taking advantage of opportunities placed before her.

Melanie knows what it takes for her daughter to be involved in the NJAS. She was actively involved during her own years as a junior and represented Louisiana in the 1978 National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest in Des Moines, Iowa.

► The Ourso family takes to heart the need to provide a support system. Whether Jennifer is at the show or back home in Louisiana, her grandparents are always within walking distance. Frank (left) and Sandra (lower right) Sotile provide the backbone for Jennifer's involvement with Angus cattle. Together, they operate a small commercial herd and raise sugarcane. When their daughter, Melanie (upper right), was growing up, Frank and Sandra strongly believed in her involvement in showing cattle. Now Melanie shares her love with her daughter, Jennifer.

"If they go to a show, I'm going to be there," Frank says. "I'm 59 years old, and I can still get down on my knees, and I still help fit heifers."



► Part of being a junior member means looking out for others. Younger members get their start and become strong leaders by watching and learning from older members.

"Jennifer is my friend. She is there for me before I go into the ring," Codi says.

Throughout the national junior show, Jennifer was by Codi's side, leading a heifer to the ring or helping Codi gather the equipment she would need to show. Her unselfishness is evident in the time and effort she gives to others.

"If they win, it's like I won," Jennifer says.



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► It can be seen in the faces of the children who surround Jennifer that they admire her and see her as a leader.



► Frank and Jennifer spend a lot of time together at cattle shows and at home in southern Louisiana. Frank says he is proud of who his granddaughter has grown up to be.

"Jennifer never stops. She's not a lazy person," Frank says. "You look at it like this — just like good cattle, you go back and look at the granddam. Just seeing that they are progressing and doing more than I did — than what her mother did — that's what you want to see. I've seen this in the past two generations, and I am amazed at what Jennifer is doing."

Jennifer, who is 17, is nearing the end of her junior career. But that doesn't mean she is finished with Angus cattle. "I don't have but a few more years, but I want to be involved in it every step," Jennifer says.



► Jennifer and Codi spend a lot of time together at cattle shows. Both girls enjoy working with their heifers, and neither girl is afraid of the dirt and sweat that goes into showing cattle.



► Jennifer says some of the best experiences that the NJAS offers juniors include allowing them to be involved in and to learn from the competitions. The Louisiana group is active at the NJAS. Jennifer says everyone takes turns, which plays a big role in how they are able to participate in all of the contests.

► Jennifer has participated in nearly every contest available at the NJAS. The experiences mean much more to her than just winning or losing. "It's all the memories. I've made so many friends across the country," Jennifer says. "These experiences have taught me skills — such as communication, dedication and responsibility. Along with friendships made, it will all last a lifetime and be remembered forever."

