

by Allen Moczygemba  
CEO, American Angus Association



## The driving force

*With the September's issue theme of Young Guns, I couldn't help but think about my column in the September issue of the Angus Beef Bulletin. In that column, I wrote about the differences of growing up in a rural community during the 1950s versus today's technology-driven world. Whether one lives in the country or near a suburban area, technology's influence on our children has grown exponentially since my parent's generation.*

My father, as did many kids that lived in the country, each morning school was in session saddled up and rode his horse to school. While it wasn't a particularly long distance — a little over 2 miles — nonetheless, everyday my father rode a horse to school.

It's a different world today. Most young people don't ride a horse to school. They have access to technologies, both in the classroom and at their fingertips, that were beyond anyone's imagination during my father's youth.

But while some things have changed, there are still institutions that help connect our grounded foundations from the past to the future. About the time my folks were graduating high school, the American Angus Association formed the Junior Activities Department in 1956. Its original purpose was to encourage young people to become involved with Angus steer and heifer projects while assisting them in doing a better job with their projects. Over the years, that mission was expanded to include projects and programs that help juniors develop their skills and character.

## Raising our advocates

Today, National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members number approximately 5,000 strong from all across the United States and Canada. In addition to the national organization, there are many state, regional and local junior Angus associations with members who are actively involved in the NJAA. These groups, with the assistance of the Association, meet regularly; sponsor shows and contests; and take an active role in the Angus business.

While it's important we take care of our own when it comes to developing future Angus seedstock producers and commercial cattlemen and women, there's an ancillary benefit that's just as important. That's developing spokespersons for not only the Association and the Angus breed, but also for the entire cattle industry.

A number of members of the NJAA will end up having careers in major urban centers. It will be those young people, who will have neighbors who don't have an agriculture or livestock background, who can have an impact that's maybe even more significant than those staying on

the ranch. They'll be able to serve as the liaison between our way of life and those who have questions about who produces their food, how it was produced and where it comes from. For they not only will defend us but, more importantly, they'll represent each of us that is involved in the noble production of food and feeding our society.

The NJAA and the Angus Foundation — with its support of youth, education and research — are ultimately what help prepare Angus youth for the future. It's where our "Young Guns" are first identified, nurtured and developed. It's why our support, both by participation and financially, is so important. Our support ensures that our junior members have a strong foundation to fall back on and a bright future for their dreams and goals.

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