

The Next Six

Meet the next generation of green coats eagerly stepping up to serve on the National Junior Angus Board of Directors. With six new members, six others hang up their coats as their time on the board comes to an end.

by Chloé Fowler, Angus Communications, and Lindsay King, assistant editor

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The green jacket: a symbol of leadership, honor, integrity, dedication and respect in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). Many seek a position on the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) of directors, but only six elite members are voted in by their peers each July at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

The first set of directors debuted at the 1980 NJAS in Kansas City, Mo. Each year six individuals are nominated to serve for two years. Every year the veteran six combine with the new to create a force that is 12 members strong. Each group has a tradition of fondly referring to their fellow directors as “my six.”

“The green jackets are a time-honored tradition, and this board is set up to do a really great job in the next year,” says Jaclyn Upperman, American Angus Association director of events and education. “We are excited about the new junior officers and board.”

NJAB members spend their first year learning the ropes as a director, before giving way to leadership positions in the second-year term. These ambassadors of the Association travel across the nation for shows,

conferences and other opportunities to promote the business breed and NJAA.

“The junior board is responsible for the NJAA programs, and they provide leadership for the members,” Upperman adds. “Their two years of commitment allows them to volunteer their time and passion for the Angus juniors and give back to what they were raised in.”

Leading the charge as chairman is Sydnee Gerken, Cashion, Okla. She is assisted by Madison Sundsbak, Des Lacs, N.D., vice chairman; Hayley DeHaan, McMinnville, Ore., communications director; Dawson Dal Porto, Oakley, Calif., Angus Foundation director; Brody Fitzgerald, West Grove, Pa., leadership director; and Jera Pipkin, Republic, Mo., membership director.

Each state junior association is allowed to nominate one candidate for the board. Through a rigorous application and campaign process, candidates spend their week at NJAS networking with the voting delegates from each state who decide their fate later in the week.

The American Angus Association is proud to present the “next six.”

Meet the next six

Tyler Bush

The sixth-generation Angus breeder hails from Britton, S.D., and says a major aspect of the NJAA that has influenced him has been the mentorship program. Through his position on the board, he plans to take the program to the next level. Currently attending Hutchinson Community College, Bush is majoring in agribusiness and minoring in animal science.

“Ultimately, I have always known I will be back on our family farm running Angus cattle alongside my grandfather and father,” Bush says. “Every day I am working with them is another day I spend learning and growing in my passion and knowledge for Angus cattle.”

Bush is fervently pursuing his dream to judge livestock on a collegiate level.

“I hope to one day judge livestock alongside my father,” Bush adds. “It’ll

be at this point that I will know I have made all the right moves in life.”

Keegan Cassady

This Oklahoma State University (OSU) student from Bloomington, Ill., is the poster child for the influence the NJAS contests can have outside of the show ring. At her first NJAS in 2009, Cassady found her place in the Association. Just a few months later, she received her first Angus heifer.



Elected to serve as officers and directors of the National Junior Angus Board for the coming year are (front row, from left) Sydnee Gerken, chairman; Madison Sundsbak, vice chairman; Hayley DeHaan, communications director; Dawson Dal Porto, Angus Foundation director; Brody Fitzgerald, leadership director; Jera Pipkin, membership director; (back row, from left) Caroline Cowles, Baxter Knapp, Grady Dickerson, Keegan Cassady, Dylan Denny and Tyler Bush.

“I grew up surrounded by Angus enthusiasts, and their passion for Angus cattle was infectious,” says the animal science junior. “I am a big advocate for the contests at the NJAS. Although they can be intimidating to new members, these contests offer something for everyone and can help juniors find their passion and place in the industry.”

With an emphasis in business and a pre-law option tacked on to her degree, Cassady intends to pursue a career in agricultural policy one day.

“Going to law school after graduation will allow me to follow my passion in agriculture while being a voice for producers,” Cassady says.

Caroline Cowles

The mother of all bear hugs hit this Rockfield, Ky., native like a freight

train when her name was called to join the NJAB. With tears spewing, Cowles donned the giant green jacket of her older brother, Corbin, who finished his term on the NJAB in August.

“From the moment you become a member of this Association, you are automatically part of the Angus family,” Cowles says. “This family turns out to be a large group of people you only see two to three times a year, but they are the people you will take with you for the rest of your life.”

Handed the lead of her first heifer at just 5 years old, Cowles has known Angus was her future from the very beginning. The OSU sophomore is taking the animal science route to a degree either in medicine or pharmaceuticals.

“My passion lies in agriculture

and helping others. Being elected to the NJAB, I get to exercise both of those while making a difference in an organization that means so much to me,” Cowles says.

Dylan Denny

“I owe so much to those green coats that made an effort to talk to me at my first national show,” says the Lubbock, Texas, native. “They have ignited a fire beneath me that burns for the Angus breed.”

Despite his suburban upbringing, Denny owns a herd of 65 Angus cattle. He gives all the credit for his success in the industry to his Angus peers, for their inspiration, encouragement and helping hands when needed. The OSU freshman is an agricultural business major, but

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he keeps close to the production side of agriculture through his animal science minor.

“The NJAA is a one-of-a-kind organization. It is one of the few organizations in the world that can successfully have a sizable membership while still making it feel as though you know every single person in it,” Denny adds.

His service-oriented heart prompts him to work toward building a study abroad program for Angus juniors to visit Scotland and learn about the origins of the breed. Chosen through an application-and-interview process, students would learn about the history of the breed firsthand.

Grady Dickerson

With the goal of working in food distribution, this Paradise, Kan., wildcat is at Kansas State University pursuing a degree in food science. Though he wears purple, his heroes have always worn green.

“The NJAA has a plethora of incredibly capable industry leaders that continue to push the Angus

breed forward, and those men and women are the ones that we as juniors can look up to,” Dickerson says. “Almost all of those role models have been in the same shoes that juniors are in today.”

Dickerson recognizes the heart of the NJAA is its younger members. However, his goal as a board member is to incorporate more of the older members back into NJAB activities.

“There are a lot of older members of the NJAA still involved at NJAS; however, there are far more that are not nearly as involved as they could be,” Dickerson adds. “Our juniors strive to improve their projects, master their speeches and hone their skills every chance they get. Something like a recordkeeping contest might bring more members out of the woodwork.”

Baxter Knapp

With career goals already aligned to include Angus at the forefront, the Illinois Central College sophomore is on the fast track to putting his animal science and agricultural

business degree to good use. The livestock judging team member plans to transfer to a four-year college next year to finish out his degree and judging career.

“The NJAA has molded me into the man I am today,” Knapp says. “It has been a goal of mine to give back. Making a difference and giving back will always be a main priority for me, well after my time in the NJAA is up.”

The Bloomfield, Iowa, second-generation cattleman brings a state-focused mentality to the board. With plans to implement a mentorship and networking program on a state level in his time on the board, Knapp is looking forward to connecting members, young and old, for friendship, education and mentorship.

“The opportunity to run for the green jacket has been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember,” Knapp says. “Since Day 1, I have been blessed with so many opportunities, and I can only hope to one day give back to the association that has given me so much.”

Sending another six off

With the introduction of six new members, six officers retire from their two-year term. Farewell speeches and the shedding of their beloved green coats took place at the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference in Billings, Mont.

Retiring this year are Madison Butler, Vincennes, Ind.; Will Pohlman, Prairie Grove, Ark.; Catie Hope, Berryville, Va.; Corbin Cowles,



Rockfield, Ky.; Jordyn Wagner, Billings, Mont.; and Michaela Clowser, Milford, Neb.

The Association, advisors and juniors are grateful for the hard work and dedication each retiring member poured into their time on the board. With big shoes to fill year after year, the next six are eager to begin their journey, clad in a jacket so many before them have admired and striven for. 