

Wholehearted Leadership

Recognized for her skills, service and involvement in the National Junior Angus Association, Sierra Day was awarded the Jim Baldrige Outstanding Leadership Award at the National Junior Angus Show.

by Laura Bardot, Angus Communications

Cerro Gordo, Ill., native Sierra Day says her love for Angus and the industry all started with her involvement in 4-H and has flourished into a passion. As she continued to learn from the Angus breed and beef cattle industry, she did not have to look far to find a fiery drive for both. It was natural for Day to be involved in the cattle industry because of her mother's involvement in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and the Angus industry.

"I am very fortunate to win the outstanding leader award because the NJAA is compiled of many

outstanding leaders that go above and beyond to make a difference within the Association as well as their state Angus associations," Day says. "Throughout my time within the Angus breed, I have taken the initiative to aid in making a difference in the Association on a state and national level. I feel very honored to have my leadership efforts recognized through this award."

What she's doing now

Day attended Lakeland Community College, in Mattoon, Ill., graduating this spring with an

associate degree in agriculture. She intends to continue her education at Kansas State University (K-State) with hopes of obtaining a bachelor's degree in animal science with an emphasis in communications, as well as marketing.

She was active in several clubs and organizations at Lakeland, including the livestock judging team, Lakeland College Agriculture Transfer Club and Postsecondary Agriculture Student team. At K-State, she plans participate in Block and Bridle and Collegiate Cattlewomen.

Day received a \$2,500 scholarship for higher education along with this



Sierra Day (left), Cerro Gordo, Ill., was named outstanding leader at the NJAS. Also pictured is Rance Long, presenting.

honor. Each year, an outstanding NJAA member is recognized for their involvement and contributions to the Association. In 2014, the award was named the Jim Baldrige Outstanding Leadership Award in memory of Baldrige's lifetime of service to the Angus breed.

"In 2013, Bill and Betty Werner gave a generous gift of \$50,000 to establish the permanent endowment in memory of Jim Baldrige," says Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president. "Jim's legacy is everlasting in the Angus breed with this award and scholarship."

Her NJAA career

An active member of the NJAA for 11 years, Day has held several leadership positions within her state association. She is currently serving as the first vice president for the Illinois Junior Angus Association (IJAA) and was the 2017-2018 president. She was also Illinois Angus Royalty and served as the opening ceremonies chairperson for this year's NJAS.

In 2017, she was recognized as the Illinois Outstanding Angus Junior. Day has received both her NJAA Bronze and Silver awards, attended the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference and Raising the Bar several times. She has been active in other youth organizations, including the Illinois Junior Beef Association, Illinois 4-H and FFA.

"What started as a small 4-H project continued to blossom as I began to learn that I didn't have to look very far to find what makes me passionate," Day says. "The cattle industry has always had a special place in my heart, so it was just natural for me to become involved at the national level."



Through her involvement with the Association, she has made memories and friendships on a personal level and networked professionally. She believes it is important to make an impact on the industry and other junior members.

A big part of Day's mark was through the creation of social media accounts for the IJAA. She says these accounts helped connect juniors all across the state. Day made her mark on the IJAA through the Illinois Junior Board's takeover of Snapchat, going Facebook Live to remind juniors about upcoming deadlines and sharing stories about Angus families on these platforms.

Dedicated passion

Throughout her time as a junior, Day says she has seen both defeat and success. When she first started showing at NJAS she did not have class winners like she had hoped. Through hard work and determination, she raised and showed cattle that would place in the top three of the class. Her work ethic has served as an example to younger members as a reminder to work hard to achieve goals.

After attending NJAS 12 times, Day has pinpointed her favorite contests. These include the All-American *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) Cook-Off, team sales, quiz bowl, prepared public speaking,

creative writing, graphic design and career development. She has reached out to younger juniors who wish to participate in contests to give them advice on getting more involved.

She has been an active member in the team sales for Illinois most of her junior career, working with all types of people and presentation styles. Her dedication to team sales has helped her mentor several teams. This voluntary dedication of her time to others without asking anything in return speaks volumes about her character and dedication to Angus. She encourages younger members to get started early in the NJAA and NJAS.

"The best advice that I can give to younger members involved in the NJAA is to go for everything that sets your soul on fire and do it with every ounce of passion that you have inside of you," Day says.

Day has exemplified the qualities of an outstanding leader and the requirements for this award. She looks back on her junior show career and acknowledges it was a memorable and successful experience. She says she finds more success in her ability to be a leader who uses her experiences to help others grow and succeed.

"Have a desire to build your skills and grow on a personal level? Put yourself out there and participate in every contest and conference available," Day encourages. "Dreaming of a championship handshake or a herd full of high-quality cattle? Talk to industry leaders, apply what you learn. To put it simply, one day you're going to be latching onto the show halter for the last time in your junior career. So, do me a favor — pursue your passions and don't ever touch anything with half your heart." 🍀