

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



Leaders of tomorrow

One of my most vivid childhood memories is when I was 7 or 8 years old, and I pulled a calf by myself. In hindsight, I'm not sure I did a whole lot, but in my mind, I saved the calf's life.

Either way, my childhood being raised in the beef business has had a profound influence on who I am today. I'm an old show kid. I just fell in love with registered cattle, had the opportunity to show in 4-H and FFA, and that love extended to collegiate judging teams. I know many others came into this business the same way.

Someday our current Angus juniors will look back just as we do and say they had impactful experiences that shaped who they are. And one major event many will look to, a cornerstone of their experiences, is the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). I attended NJAS in the past for a day or two here and there, but this is the first time I have taken in the event from start to finish, and certainly for the first time in this new role.

As I watched our Angus juniors, I saw those experiences solidifying future careers. It was so significant to me to be able to visit with the young folks and to watch them not only participating, but throwing themselves wholly into the NJAS show and contests.

I had a front-row seat as a judge of the American Angus Auxiliary-sponsored All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® Cook-Off competition. I can see why it's been a marquee contest for so many years. The food


was impressive; but even more so was the creativity, communication skills, passion and leadership ability on display by each team.

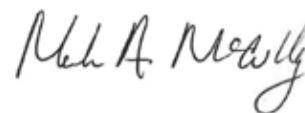
The National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) is doing an incredible job of developing the next generation of not only Angus breeders, but also agricultural and community leaders. The opportunities juniors have during the NJAS to grow in public speaking, photography and other contests, while taking care of their cattle and showing and exhibiting are second to none. It's truly an incredible week.

Beyond competition

But, it's not just the NJAS. There are opportunities for juniors to plug in at their state and regional levels that really develop tomorrow's leaders, as well. The commitment that the NJAA and the American Angus Association have made to the next generation over the years is incredible, and it's only going to continue. Programs like Raising the Bar and Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD), among others, develop our young people into the well-rounded leaders of tomorrow.

My biggest takeaway from the NJAS wasn't the hard work and long hours the juniors put in. It wasn't

the tears of feeling and triumph or the sense of family across the entire event. It wasn't the purple banners or buckles, trophies or plaques. It wasn't even the speeches, the amazing talents in judging, auctioneering or salesmanship. It was that our Angus juniors have an incredible ability to advocate for our business. They're so passionate about the Angus breed, and it makes me so very optimistic for the future. 



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