



Transitioning to a New Role

Six National Junior Angus Board of Directors retire their green coats, while six new members sport them for the first time.

By: Kaci Foraker, editorial intern

The bright green coats of the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) of Directors are easy to spot whether they are helping in a barn full of black cattle or advocating for the breed at various events. Though, the green coat they don isn't the only thing that is noticed by those they come in contact with. Their passion for Angus and youth is sure to be noted by all.

Creating a 12-member group, NJAB members serve the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members by organizing and implementing programs, while being leaders and spokesmen for the Angus industry during their two-year term.

Representatives must be nominated by their state junior association and complete a lengthy application process. After NJAB hopefuls campaign for a week at the junior show, six new members are selected by voting delegates from each state. During their first year of service, board members grasp their role under the

title of directors. Upon completion of one year on the NJAB, they are designated leadership positions.

For the coming year, the NJAB will be led by chairman Tyler Bush of Britton, S.D., and vice chairman Baxter Knapp of Bloomfield, Iowa. Filling the four other leadership positions are Caroline Cowles, Rockfield, Ky., communications director; Dylan Denny, Lubbock,

Texas, Angus Foundation director; Grady Dickerson, Paradise, Kan., leadership director; and Keegan Cassady, Bloomington, Ill., membership director.

Each NJAB board member carves their unique path in the Angus industry; find out each of their defining moments as the NJAA introduces the succeeding six and says farewell to six others.



Chosen to serve on the National Junior Angus Board for the upcoming term (front row, from left) are Baxter Knapp, vice chairman; Caroline Cowles, communications director; Dylan Denny, Angus Foundation director; Keegan Cassady, membership director; Grady Dickerson, leadership director; Tyler Bush, chairman; (back row, from left) Daniel Rohrbaugh, Megan Pelan, Nick Pohlman, Justin Wood, Kelsey Vejraska and Reagan Skow.



Signing on



Megan Pelan

Stoked for her next two years of service, Megan Pelan of Jefferson, Md., hopes to have a positive influence on NJAA members. Though she may not have as long of involvement with Angus cattle as some, the NJAB members served as pivotal role models for her.

She always looked up to the board members when she was showing and competing in NJAA-sponsored events. That mentorship sparked a goal to wear the green coat and serve as a figure to younger members.

Thinking back to a difficult situation Pelan faced from losing her heifer at the NJAS held in Des Moines, Iowa, she discovered her true love for the Angus industry.

“The Iowa junior association made a card out of a manila envelope that had stickers all over it from a Sullivan Supply book,” she describes. “They really comforted me and showed me that we are all one big family. That’s when I realized it’s not all about the cattle, but really about the people and the lifelong connections we can make. That interaction opened a door for me and made me want to be involved with the association even more.”

Currently a sophomore at Kansas State University (K-State), Pelan is studying animal sciences and plans

to use lessons learned as an NJAA member in her career as a feedlot nutrition specialist.

Nicholas Pohlman

Fourth-generation cattleman Nicholas Pohlman of Prairie Grove, Ark., has high hopes for the NJAB as well as himself as he starts his journey to becoming a doctor by attending the University of Arkansas.



“I made the decision that I wanted to run for the board after seeing Cory Watt do all he did for the members despite all the adversity he had to go through,” Pohlman says. “That really showed me his dedication and passion for the breed and its people, just like I have. From that moment, I knew I wanted to run for the board with aspirations of one day giving back to the juniors to help them become tomorrow’s leaders.”

He started attending NJAA events before he could even participate learn with his older brother. Over the years he put in the hard work to learn and become an advocate for the American Angus Association.

“I’m ecstatic and looking forward to the next two years working with the newly elected board members and all 12 together to see what we can do to improve the Angus breed,” Pohlman says.

Daniel Rohrbaugh

K-State sophomore Daniel Rohrbaugh has been showing cattle, participating in contests and holding leadership positions in Angus organizations since he was 9 years old. Those experiences pushed him to step out of his comfort zone and ultimately lead him to being elected to the NJAB.

Rohrbaugh recounts how a previous board member lent a hand to him at a show, which has stuck with him years later.

“In 2011, I had a heifer in the bred-and-owned show who listened amazingly but spooked in the show ring,” Rohrbaugh says. “She knocked me down to the ground and I was embarrassed because I was the kid that let my heifer go in the ring. The green coats were there to help me out. Those juniors have given so much to me and it’s something I would like to give back by serving on the board.”



Even if Rohrbaugh can help one junior member with their heifer or give a tidbit of advice before they enter a contest, he feels that action would be fulfilling his position and lead to a better future for the NJAA. In his future, he plans to continue his love for agriculture by finding a career path in the industry after

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he completes his bachelor's degree in agribusiness while minoring in animal science.

Reagan Skow



Reagan Skow attended her first NJAS in 2010 and hasn't missed one since.

In her almost 15 years as an NJAA member, Skow grew to love the industry by attending the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) as well as the Raising the Bar conferences.

"Ever since I was a little kid, I didn't know exactly what the role of the green coats was, but I knew they were leaders," Skow says. "I always looked up to them and knew I wanted to be like that for someone else. As I grew up and got more actively involved with the green coats, a large majority of them have impacted me in some way. Applying was a big commitment, but I know if I did something meaningful for at least one junior I met my goal."

During the next two years, Skow anticipates expanding educational offerings of the organization while creating new relationships with juniors and adults.

The Palisade, Neb., native hopes to continue her involvement with Angus by promoting the breed after

she graduates from Oklahoma State University (OSU) with degrees in ag communications and food science.

Kelsey Vejraska

Hoping to bring representation to states with smaller memberships, Kelsey Vejraska of Omak, Wash., applied to the NJAB. Growing up on her family's registered and commercial cattle operation, Vejraska quickly dived into the possibilities of being an NJAA member.

Her involvement gave her the skills to easily strike up conversations with her peers and ultimately led her to a career path. This fall, Vejraska will be a sophomore at OSU majoring in ag communications and agribusiness.



"Over the years the Angus Association has given me so much and I would definitely not be where I am today without it," Vejraska says. "Especially as I went across the country to go to school, the NJAA really pushed me to step outside of my comfort zone and gave me the opportunities to do so. It's given me so much and I think it's time for me to give back, and being on the board is a perfect way to do it."

Justin Wood

From Willow Spring, N.C., Justin Wood brings his dedication and rich Angus background to the NJAB.

Once he could handle a heifer and show stick in the show ring, he was off to discover everything he could about the industry.

"As I got older and I started attending a lot more conferences that were put on by the NJAA, I knew I had a passion for becoming a leader in the industry," Wood says. "The junior board just gives you an opportunity to go so many places and make so many connections with others from across the country. It was intriguing to meet as many junior members as I could during my campaign, but down the road I think it will benefit my career and education."

Wood will continue his education at Hutchinson Community College this fall to obtain a degree in agribusiness, while being a part of the livestock judging team.

On the NJAB, he plans to bring a junior-focused outlook to help younger members build their confidence and develop themselves as successful cattlemen and women.



Signing off

During the NJAS closing ceremony, there were very few dry eyes at the conclusion of retiring addresses given by the six NJAB members ending their terms. They truly hung up their green coats at the 2019 LEAD Conference in Nashville, Tenn.

WIN, PLACE & SHOWING FOR THE PURPLE



Retiring this year are Dawson Dal Porto, Oakley, Calif.; Hayley DeHaan, McMinnville, Ore.; Broderic Fitzgerald, West Grove, Pa.; Sydnee Gerken, Cashion, Okla.; Jera Pipkin, Republic, Mo.; and Madison Sundsbak, Des Lacs, N.D.

Positively influencing NJAA youth is a goal for each NJAB member, but all six retiring directors acknowledged the juniors influenced their lives as well. Many named one of their more memorable moments as a board member was helping a junior in the show ring or offering advice before a junior applied for a leadership position.

However, the memories that stuck with them were when those same junior members thanked them

later, succeeded in their competition or continued trying despite a major setback.

Six retiring members are ending their time holding a board position, but the effect they had during their years of service will leave a lasting impression on the juniors, advisors, Association and Angus business. 



2018-2019 NJAB members are Caroline Cowles, Baxter Knapp, Grady Dickerson, Dylan Denny, Tyler Bush, Keegan Cassidy, Hayley DeHaan, Jera Pipkin, Dawson Dal Porto, Sydnee Gerken, Broderic Fitzgerald and Madison Sundsbak.