

## Future Focus

*The Career Development Contest allows National Junior Angus Association members to set themselves up for success in the future.*

*by Megan Silveira, assistant editor*

What if we lived our present lives with the constant goal of doing something our future selves would be proud of? Would we be set up for success? Would we possess the skills needed to accomplish our dreams?

National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members are given the opportunity to make their future selves proud by competing in the Career Development Contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

The competition allows NJAA members to interview for a position of their choosing. The process is made complete with the creation of a résumé and cover letter tailored to fit the job at hand. By competing in this event, NJAA members allow themselves to develop into individuals ready to make a splash in the workforce.

“I have always known that when I’m out of college, I would need to enter the workforce,” says Maddie Fugate, NJAA member from Illinois. “I have always had the mentality that I get better with every interview that I do, meaning that this competition is just one more way to better myself.”

Fugate has participated in this NJAS contest for the past three years



and says it has come to help her and her fellow young Angus producers prepare for life after the NJAA. Fugate isn’t the only NJAA member who places a lot of emphasis on this contest, however.

Eva Hinrichsen, NJAA member from Kansas, says this is her fifth year showcasing and perfecting her interview skills through participation in the Career Development Contest.

“It is one of my favorite contests, because I feel it is great practice for future interviews for an internship or job,” she explains.

### Different development, same success

The Career Development Contest was one of the NJAS events that experienced change to cope with the recent pandemic. While contestants were still required to submit a résumé, cover letter and short job description, the interview process of the event was certainly different.

Contestants completed an interview with a three-person judging panel via Zoom meeting. This process allowed for personal conversation to be had between the



two parties while also promoting social distancing.

Fugate says despite this change, she felt that the NJAA staff created an altered event that felt much like the original. While Fugate jokingly says she enjoyed having to complete one less outfit change during the show itself, she missed the opportunity to shake her judges' hands or share a smile in person.

"It really lacked the face-to-face contact of really being able to gauge the judges' reactions and connect on a more personal level," she explains.

Hinrichsen describes the change as an added challenge, further deepening the level of competition as participants lost the ability to closely interact with the judges.

"I think the energy a person possesses when they walk into a room and one's handshake can say a lot about a person's character," Hinrichsen adds.

In agreement with Fugate, Hinrichsen says the silver lining of these changes was the abandonment of her heels. Despite enjoying the opportunity to compete from the comfort of her own home, Hinrichsen says she is eager for the contest to resume in normal conditions in the upcoming years.

## Forward-thinkers

No matter how the interviews through the Career Development Contest were conducted, Fugate says this type of event encourages growth in NJAA members. The NJAA is all about preparing the junior

membership to tackle the challenges of tomorrow, and Fugate says this is one of the best opportunities to expose young Angus producers to the career field.

Hinrichsen says while she might have a special place in her heart for this competition, she knows ultimately her participation is going to push her in the right direction in the future.

"This contest has helped me gain confidence in my interview skills and put me one step ahead of others who have not had the same opportunity," she explains. "My favorite part of competing is having the opportunity to be myself and share my qualifications that I have worked hard to perfect."

This type of competition puts NJAA members in close contact with potential future employers, an experience junior Angus men and women should not pass up, she says. If the connections were not enough incentive, Hinrichsen says this contest is actually built around the idea of shaping juniors into hireable individuals capable of securing a job in the future.

With every interview a junior member has, Fugate says they are one step closer to being ready to find their place in the workplace.


The Career Development contest teaches contestants to not only speak professionally, but also receive

feedback on their interview skills.

"There is no other junior organization that is preparing their junior members for the future better than the NJAA," she says. "The NJAA is teaching kids life skills in a fun and competitive manner. Whether they know it or

not, the skills they learn in these contests will be with them their entire life."

Hinrichsen describes this NJAS event as the perfect combination of friendly competition and the chance to further develop skills that will be applicable later down the road in a junior's life.

She says, "I would encourage all junior members to compete in this contest because it is a true life skill that they will use in the future." 

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