

# 2021

# NATIONAL JUNIOR ANGUS SHOW

*The Grandest Show*

## Targeting Trade School

*New Angus Foundation scholarship supports youth pursuing vocational careers.*

*by Jessica Wesson, Angus Beef Bulletin intern*

John Mrotek founded the John R. Mrotek Family Technical Education Scholarship Endowment Fund in 2020 to provide academic scholarships for students pursuing education in career and technical programs. This scholarship is the first of its kind for the Angus Foundation, as it specifically targets youth in trade schools and supports vocational careers.

“I have been involved in the NJAA (National Junior Angus Association) and 4-H for many years,” Mrotek says. “My grandchildren were both active in NJAA, by competing in the queens contests, receiving scholarships and attending many regional and national Angus events.”

He envisioned a scholarship that prioritized trade school disciplines, and it was important to him Angus youth recognize this route of education as valuable.

“We have a great need today for air conditioning mechanics, electricians, automotive mechanics and other employees in similar fields,” Mrotek says. “There are several kids that don’t want to go to a traditional four-year college for several reasons. This is a different way to get an education that works better for some students.”

Thomas Marten, executive director of the Angus Foundation, says eligible scholarship candidates



should be pursuing a degree that is terminal in nature.

“Their degrees equip them with life skills that they will be able to immediately apply in their career field,” he explains.

Some examples of certifications and degrees students might pursue are welding, diesel mechanics, veterinary technicians or cosmetology. Mrotek is passionate about supporting youth in agriculture, specifically Angus youth.

Linda Alexander, Mrotek’s daughter, was present along with her father at the 2021 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) to assist with the scholarship presentation.

“In many of these trades, the average worker is over the age of 50 and even pushing 60,” Alexander says. “That means they’re reaching retirement age, and there’s not enough young people coming into the trades.”

A trade school education has numerous benefits for students

who do not want to go to a university, and Alexander says that should be highlighted more.

“For a long time in the school system, there was a big push for kids to go to college,” Alexander says. “If that’s for you, then absolutely go ahead. But if kids don’t want that and

they are willing to work with their hands, there are opportunities within the trades.”

Careers in these trades offer benefits perfect for some of the Angus youth, she explains.

“They can still make six-figure salaries and run their own businesses,” Alexander says. “Many kids in the Angus world are raised with good family values, work ethic and manners, and when added with a trade, that will take them lightyears ahead of other people.”

Alexander’s experience working at her local high school opened her eyes to the need for more scholarships focusing on young people in career and technical education.

“Trade school is expensive during the short time that kids are there, but what comes out on the other end is very valuable,” Alexander says.

This was the first year the scholarship was awarded, and Mrotek was excited to be able to present the scholarship at the 2021

NJAS in Grand Island, Neb.

"I was very excited to be able to meet the scholarship winner," Mrotek says. "It's very meaningful to me to be able to help him pay for his education. We've been blessed to be part of the NJAA, and we wanted to give back."

Maguire Rohr, a rising sophomore at Hutchinson Community College in Hutchinson, Kan., is the first student to receive this scholarship.

"It's been really neat to be the first person ever to get this scholarship," Rohr says. "I know there will be more people who receive this scholarship down the road, so it's been really cool to be the first."

Rohr's degree in farm and ranch management is a prime example of a typical career and technical education program.

"My program allows me to get

all kinds of certifications and skills that will help me back on the farm," Rohr explains. "I can get an AI (artificial insemination) certification, a pesticide application certification and a CDL. There are also more specific classes that teach farming and ranching skills."

The classroom knowledge and skills are not the only reason Rohr values his technical education.

"I get to meet a lot of people that are in the same industry doing the same things I am," he says. "I have those friendships now, and when I come back to the farm, I know I'll have those connections if I ever need them."

One of the appeals of a trade school degree for Rohr was time efficiency.

"I think it's nice for kids to get through school in two years, get what

they need and go start building their career," Rohr says.

The Mrotek Family Technical Education Scholarship made a significant difference in Rohr's educational situation.

"It has been nice to not have the financial responsibility for myself or my parents," Rohr says. "My twin sister is a student at Kansas State University, so this scholarship has made it easier for my parents."

Mrotek encourages other donors to make contributions wherever and however they could.

"I hope other people donate, even if they can't make a big contribution," Mrotek says. "I gave stock to the Angus Foundation, and it worked very nicely for me. It's very fulfilling to know that this scholarship fund could grow for future students." **AJ**

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