

KELSON, BOLOGNA AND THE ANGUS BREED

An Illinois junior finds his place in the NJAA.

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

Sitting in the barns at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), Kelson Kuipers' eyes are locked on the four-legged friends trailing after his fellow Angus breeders. It's not cattle that have his attention; but as he sees the canines trailing their owners, his mind wanders back home to Illinois.

There, the 11-year-old's best friend reclines. The gray tabby, Bologna, eagerly awaits the return of the Kuiper family.

"If there were junior national cat shows, I think he'd be at it," his mom, Krista, jokes. "He likes to ask why people can bring their dogs to [cattle] shows, but he can't bring his cat."

Kuipers has shown his cat at the county fair for the past several years, and since his older sister, Claire, showed her first heifer at NJAS, he's left Bologna home for a week to join his family.

Angus proud

Raising Angus cattle is a bit of a family tradition for the Kuipers. Thanks to his father, Trevor's, side of the family, Kelson is a fourth-generation Angus breeder. Krista grew up showing hogs, so both parents knew the benefit of getting involved in the ag industry.

"We knew our kids needed to show livestock," Krista explains. "This is what our family does."

Kelson was excited to pick out

his first heifer and get started with his National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) involvement, Trevor says.

"Her name was Elsa," Kelson shares, just like the movie *Frozen*.

The junior has a speech delay and some difficulties with his hearing, so despite his eagerness, Krista admits it was hard for her to stay on the sidelines at times.

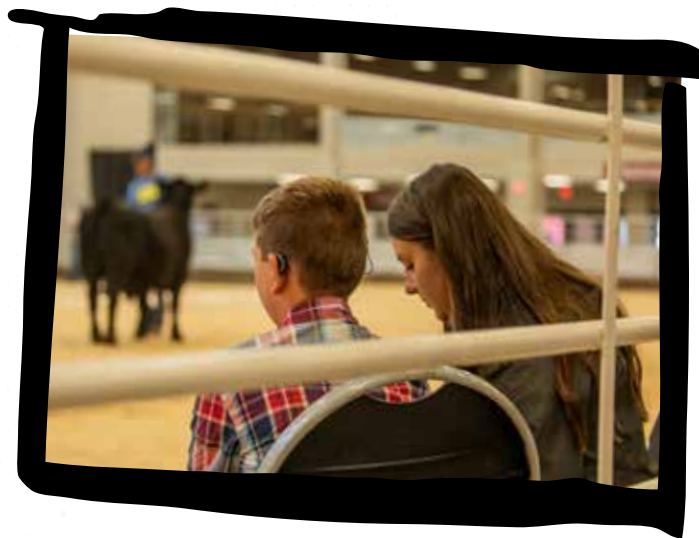
"As a mom, I'm not sure I would've let him go into the ring sometimes without the regional managers there," she explains. "Casey Jentz has been amazing helping him through the ring."

His first time showing at the Illinois State Preview Show, Kelson was leaving the ring when Elsa knocked him to the ground.

"I picked him up and he had a big 'ole grin on his face," Jentz remembers with a chuckle. "We grabbed Elsa, and away he went out of the ring, happy he got a ribbon."

The regional manager describes Kelson as resilient and tough.

"I just smile when someone says his name. He makes people happy,"



Jentz adds. "He's trying his best and doing all he can. That's all you ask for."

There's an added layer to the bond between Jentz and the young Angus breeder, however. With his oldest daughter having hearing issues of her own, Jentz knows what it's like from Kelson's parents' perspective.

"I've got a soft place in my heart for a kid that I know is going through something that," he explains.

The connection drives Jentz to make sure Kelson has the same experiences as other juniors. His efforts, along with those of his peers, mean the world to Kelson's family.

"They don't make it feel like it's a burden for him to be out there," Trevor says. "They seem to enjoy it as well. They want to jump in and be there to be an extra hand in the ring when they need to be."

NATIONAL JUNIOR ANGUS SHOW

The sentiment can be extended to other Association staff and NJAA members, as well. Since Kelson was old enough to start competing at the NJAS, he's participated in a multitude of contests. From the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American Certified Angus Beef Cook-off to Skill-a-thon, the Kuipers encourage their son to try his hand at a new event each year.

The family says Caitlyn Brandt, director of events and junior activities at the American Angus Association, has made accommodations for Kelson ever since he gave his first speech three years ago in 2021.

"I have always pushed for him to have the same opportunities that any other kid would have, especially when it came to the contests," Krista says.

In that first contest, he didn't walk away with a ribbon. Yet Krista says she was impressed that Kelson had the confidence to stand up in front of three adults and deliver a speech he had memorized on his own.

"Some of the judges came up and found us after the contest and really complimented him," Trever adds. "So even though he didn't win, it was a win for us and for him, especially."

This year, Kelson joined his state in the Cook-off, dressing up as "Cabo," the Angus version of Toto in their *Wizard of Oz*-themed skit. He was also front row to compete in the livestock judging contest.

"He's very smart, very bright and gifted," Trever explains. "He knows what to do, but sometimes struggles with filling in a bubble."

Lauren Gilbert, National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) member from Missouri, sat alongside Kelson

during the contest to help him complete the scoresheet. The green coats have become a beacon for Kelson. They're a splash of extra positivity as the junior tackles new challenges.

"It's very comforting to him when he either walks in the ring or goes to a contest, because he knows he's got a person there to support him," Trever says.

Daniel Rohrbaugh was one of the first NJAB members Kelson connected with. The Pennsylvania native served from 2019-2021, and he met Kelson in the ring at the All-American Angus Breeders' Futurity.

"Kelson is determined. He's a great young man that puts his mind to a task and gets the job done," Rohrbaugh says. "Among many other qualities, he is very hardworking and passionate about the Angus breed."

Though he's since hung up his green coat, he says there are chills down his spine when he hears that Kelson pinpoints him as a friend and supporter. It's extra helping hands like Rohrbaugh's that make all the difference to Kelson.

At next year's NJAS, he says he'll enjoy cooking some great beef again, and Krista's already helping him prepare a speech. He's also looking forward to showing Olaf, Elsa's calf. The bull might not hold a candle to Bologna, but Kelson's still enjoying every NJAA opportunity that comes to him. Kelson has become a friend to many, as Rohrbaugh describes him as the perfect cheerleader.

At the 2021 NJAS when he was retiring, Rohrbaugh spent the show



week feeling a bit emotional about having to soon take a step back from the NJAA.

"Amongst all the tears of joy and sadness came Kelson and his family," Rohrbaugh explains. "He wanted to get a picture with me, and his smile truly said it all."

When Krista looks at her son today, she says she's proud of all he's done in the NJAA.

"Someday it'll make you a great adult and a great employee or employer, because you had all these experiences, right?"

Kelson's smile is wide as he nods.

The NJAS has come to be the perfect place for Kelson to grow professionally and connect with others. The only thing that could make the show better in his mind would be the addition of a cat division, so he won't have to leave his tabby at home. **AJ**

CLARK FARMS

Angus Female Sale

NOON // SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2023 // HUSTONTOWN, PA

With Special Guest Allen Creek Farm



RITO 154 OF IDEAL 6173-174
Eighth dam of JC Dorinda 7529 0549.

JC DORINDA 7529 0549

The greatest Dorinda to sell since her legendary maternal ancestress Rito 154 of Ideal 6173-174 topped the 1989 Jorgensen Sale nearly 35 years ago. This breed treasure by the Pathfinder Sire SAV Resource 1441 carries forward the time-honored cow family made famous for its prolific production of prominent sires in the Jorgensen performance program, including the breed icons known as Eldorado 156, Rito 149, Rito 72, Rito 206, Rito 549, Super X 5189, Ideal 692, Ideal 7318, Ideal 033, Ideal 3452 and more. She sells carrying the very first service of the \$160,000 new Clark Farms Genex sire SAV Royal Flush 2735!



SAV EMBLYNETTE 2369 Proven Pathfinder® Dam of SAV Bloodline 9578, SAV Rise N Shine 2709, and SAV Royal Flush 2735 whose first service sells, along with the sale of her daughter by SAV Elation 7899!



DOUBLE R BAR ERISKAY Z194 The #1 growth daughter of N Bar Emulation EXT in the breed from the time-tested cow family that produced RR Rito 707. Selling her ET heifer pregnancy by SAV Resource 1441!



SAV BLACKCAP MAY 3503 Full sister to SAV Resource 1441, SAV Renown 3439 and SAV Recharge 3436 from the world-record income-producing cow SAV Blackcap May 4136. Selling her outstanding daughter by N Bar Emulation EXT A1747!

FEATURING HIGH-QUALITY COWS AND HEIFERS FROM THE BREED'S LEADING FAMILIES!

CLARK FARMS

JACK CLARK

1597 N Clear Ridge Road // Hustontown, PA 17229
(717) 658-6435 // Email: jclarkfarms@hotmail.com

For your free reference sale booklet, contact anyone in the office of the Sale Manager, TOM BURKE, KURT SCHAFF, ALEX POPPLEWELL, AMERICAN ANGUS HALL OF FAME, at the WORLD ANGUS HEADQUARTERS, PO Box 660, Smithville, MO 64089-0660.
Phone: (816) 532-0811. Fax: (816) 532-0851.
E-Mail: angushall@angushall.com