

GUARDIANS UNITE

The newly elected NJAS board members become Guardians of the Plains.

by Taylor Edwards, Angus Beef Bulletin intern

Becoming a “Guardian of the Plains” is a great honor. Combining diverse skill sets and backgrounds to protect and nurture an organization is a tall order. Having a mantra to remind you why your work is important is how great superheroes continue their fight. Following tradition, “for the juniors” —the phrase adopted by the 2020 National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) — is what the newest green-coated guardians will repeat as their catchphrase during their two years serving on the board.

These six individuals look to give the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) their all for the duration of their term with experience coming from many years already dedicated to *The Business Breed*. From Miss American Angus

royalty to decorated scholarship winners, they possess the tools and connections to lead the NJAA.

Hooked on a feeling

KYLI KRAFT, a fifth-generation rancher from Fort Collins, Colo., has been a lifelong fan of Angus cattle. But she hasn’t always been hooked on the NJAA experience.

“While I grew up showing cattle at our county fair and local shows, it wasn’t until COVID that my family experienced our first National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Tulsa, Okla.,” Kraft says. “Instantly, we were hooked, and I have been to every Raising the Bar, Western Regional Angus Futurity and National Junior Angus Show since.”

There’s a place for everyone in the NJAA, and Kraft says the seasoned juniors are ready to welcome new members to the

junior association with open arms.

There’s no hesitation when **MARY WOOD**, sixth-generation Angus breeder and previous Miss American Angus, talks about her inspiration to earn her green coat.

“While there are so many influential people in the NJAA that inspired me to run for this position, the one that has stood out to me most is Sally Yon,” Wood says. “Sally served on the NJAA Board of Directors whenever I first became active in the NJAA. Her mentorship sparked my passion for this association.”

SAWYER STYLES, South Dakota native and fourth-generation cattlemaster, shares that love for the Angus breed. She says it’s what gave her the courage to run for the NJAB. Not only was her junior career full of opportunities to grow skills like professionalism and work ethic, but many of her memories center around



Newly elected directors for the National Junior Angus Board (standing from left) are Suter Clark, Gretna, Va.; Alli Perry, Fayetteville, Tenn.; Jonwyn Ayres, Powers, Ore.; Mary Wood, Willow Spring, N.C.; Sawyer Styles, Brentford, S.D.; and Kyli Kraft, Fort Collins, Colo. Officers sitting (from left) are Jack Dameron, Towanda, Ill., chairman; Lauren Gilbert, Oldfield, Mo., vice chairman; Avery Mather, State Center, Iowa, secretary; Jayce Dickerson, Paradise, Kan., education director; Colter Pohlman, Hereford, Texas, Foundation director; and Lani LeBeouf, Deridder, La., events director.



NATIONAL JUNIOR ANGUS SHOW



Taking on this role will allow these new board members to influence others while bettering themselves. Kraft explains that sharing knowledge allows for new ideas, which is how she imagines this new team will achieve success.

JONWYN AYRES, Oregon

native and recent Jim Baldrige Outstanding Leadership award recipient, says, “In the next two years, I will strive to maximize the leadership development opportunities that the NJAA provides. These are truly my people, and I’m excited to serve what I believe is the best group of youth within our country and within the cattle industry.”

Answering their calling, board members fulfill a lifelong goal for many juniors, wearing the green coat, Perry explains.

SUTER CLARK, Virginia native

and commercial cattleman, says he has hopes of encouraging more NJAA members to be involved in conferences and contests so they can learn more about the breed and have a platform to share their knowledge with others. He says some of his favorite memories are from conferences where he has met many of his Angus friends.

“I feel I’ve taken enough from the association that it is time to give back,” Suter says. “One of my goals is to get the board more involved with our production-type young people.”

The six of us are partners

Each member of the NJAB shares ambitions for the next two years, but the focus of these goals are the

members. By recreating the same environments, relationships and opportunities within the NJAA that have inspired them to run for leadership and give back in the first place, the newest six to wear the green coat hope to encourage juniors to become more involved.

“As soon as I saw the list of this year’s NJAB candidates, I was immediately excited for the opportunity to work closely with such a strong group,” Perry says. “I think our six is very strong because we each bring something different to the table and our personalities mesh so well. I am truly excited to see what the next two years hold with my six.”

The group looks forward to working with each other and joining those elected last year, who will serve as officers.

“Not only are my six amazing, but the six ahead of me that I will be serving with are a phenomenal group, as well. They have already been great to us, and I do believe this team is going to be one for the books,” Styles says. “I am thankful and honored to serve with each of these members.”

As the newest Guardians of the Plains hit the ground running, they are sure to create new memories with many of the junior members. The previously adopted phrase — for the juniors — will be kept alive for years to come. **AJ**

making the most of the simple moments.

“My favorite memories as an NJAA member go back to the fun had in the South Dakota stalls,” Styles says. “Whether it was singing and dancing while cleaning or playing giant Jenga®, the positive vibe made any task fun.”

Go all the way

It was **ALLI PERRY**’s father, Jonathan, who introduced her to the late Fred Clark, founder of Deer Valley Farm. After shadowing Jonathan at the operation, she came to inherit a love for black-headed cattle from Clark.

“He became a strong, grandfather-like mentor of mine at a very young age and took my entire family in as his own,” the Fayetteville, Tenn., native says. “I owe my passion for the agriculture industry to him, and I know he is cheering me on as I take this next step.”

Being elected to the board comes with great responsibility, Perry says. With their diverse backgrounds in the industry, her six has hopes of serving as great mentors to the next generation of the NJAA.