

# Life After the Crown

*Former Miss American Angus makes her own mark in the industry.*

*by Megan Silveira, editorial intern*

From November 2016 to November 2017, donned in a bright red jacket like so many before her, Keegan Cassady served as your Miss American Angus.

Growing up in the Angus industry, as her father, Jerry, works for the Association, Keegan says her father's background influenced her to become more involved in the Association. Her interest in the breed, however, was her own.

"I grew up going to sales and shows," Keegan says. "I didn't know about the day-to-day life of the industry until I convinced my family to help me purchase my first heifer."

Jerry says he always encouraged Keegan to get involved with Angus cattle, but she also made her own decisions with how far to take it.

"Keegan was never coached or pushed by me," he says. "She found her place within the National Junior Angus Association all on her own."

Her mother, Erica Johnson, says she could always tell Keegan had a passion for the livestock industry.

"The cattle industry is where her heart is," her mom says. "She knows cattle people and just really enjoys being around them."

Keegan began showing cattle at age 9 and knew a year later she wanted to run for Miss American Angus.

"I knew I wanted to be Miss American Angus the day I met Katie Gazda," Keegan says.

Serving as queen during Keegan's first year of showing, she was struck by the way Katie went out of her way to talk to her.

Keegan started preparing for the queen application process at a young age. She served as and interacted with royalty at the state level. Keegan says this position prepared for the scholarship application process, as well as the competition itself.

"Keegan always took nice clothes to shows so she could help interact with royalty," her dad says. "She developed herself into a solid candidate for Miss American Angus."

## Earning the crown

Keegan first donned her dream red jacket in November 2016.

"It was one of my proudest moments," her mom gushes. "It was very rewarding to see her obtain the goal she had been working towards for six years."



PHOTO COURTESY AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION

*Keegan Cassady, Bloomington, Ill., was crowned the 2017 Miss American Angus. Keegan impressed the judges with her genuine passion for the business breed and love of its people.*

Keegan says she was extremely busy during her term, constantly traveling to various events and shows.

“I got to represent the American Angus Association, Angus Auxiliary and the Angus breed wherever I went,” Keegan says. “It is very humbling to serve and have so many young women look up to you.”

Keegan says her term put her in the spotlight. Serving allowed her to create a platform, make connections and represent the Angus breed.

Erica says it warmed her heart as a mother to see Keegan put on the red jacket and have little girls aspire to be like her.

Her duties as queen included traveling to several events and shows, including the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) and Atlantic National Angus Show. Keegan says her favorite duty was working at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

“It’s the busiest week of the year,” Keegan says. “But I think most queens would agree junior nationals is the best event you get to help with.”

Keegan also visited Angus headquarters in St. Joseph, Mo., during her term. Thanks to Keegan, it has now become a tradition for queens to visit headquarters.

Jerry says the time his daughter spent as Miss American Angus “provided her an enormous amount of growth.” Serving as queen gave Keegan the confidence to move to Oklahoma to attend college, he says.



PHOTOS COURTESY KEEGAN CASSADY



*Through the McKnight Scholar program Keegan’s studies took her abroad.*

### Life after royalty

Individuals serving as Miss American Angus are kept busy during their terms. Keegan says she balanced serving in that role while attending Oklahoma State University (OSU) as an animal science freshman minoring in agribusiness.

She struggled with the time commitments, and while she was sad to see her time as royalty come to an end, she was eager to spend more time on OSU’s campus.

She is always involved with several clubs on campus, even while she was serving. Since her term ended, however, Keegan says she has been able to “dedicate more time and effort to everything.”

The Block and Bridle club, OSU

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Career Liaison team, McKnight Scholar program and Sigma Alpha sorority are just a small part of the campus clubs and teams in which Keegan participates.

“The busier Keegan is, the happier she is,” her dad says. “She always puts a lot on her plate because she loves to take every opportunity presented to her.”

Keegan pushed herself to serve in various leadership positions in her clubs. However, Keegan says one of her proudest achievements was starting the Sigma Alpha professional agricultural sorority chapter at OSU.

Keegan was shocked when she found out the sorority was not already established at an agriculture-based school.

With the help of 21 other passionate young women, the chapter was established Oct. 30, 2017. Keegan’s fellow sorority sisters then elected her to serve as the first chapter president.

“Serving as president in Sigma Alpha is unlike any other leadership

position I’ve ever held,” Keegan says. “Starting an organization from scratch, as well as leading it, has been really challenging, but that much more rewarding.”

Keegan’s leadership influences more than just the Angus industry, says Jenna Maltbie, an agribusiness and agricultural



*Keegan was elected to serve as the first chapter president of Sigma Alpha sorority at OSU.*

*Continued on page 206*



Life After the Crown *continued from page 205*

communications alumna who served as vice president of Sigma Alpha last year.

“It was great to watch Keegan come from out-of-state and really make OSU her home,” Jenna says. “I got to watch her establish Sigma Alpha, which now serves as a home for other girls at OSU.”

Jenna says Keegan is “extremely dedicated and levelheaded,” traits she credits to the time Keegan spent serving as queen.

“Being Miss American Angus prepared Keegan to lead other young women,” Jenna says. “She came in ready to develop the Sigma Alpha program and make those hard decisions that come with a leadership role for a young organization.”

Keegan might be done serving as Miss American Angus, but says she has continued to push herself when planning for the future.

She now serves as president of the Block and Bridle club, and is a member of the Animal Science Leadership Alliance at OSU.

In addition to these on-campus activities, Keegan says she has not let herself lose sight of her passion for the Angus industry.

This show season was Keegan’s last, but easily the most memorable. She represented her home state of Illinois in the showmanship competition at the NJAS.

Keegan achieved one of her biggest dreams this past summer when she was elected to serve on the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) during the NJAS. If Keegan could not be found interacting with Angus exhibitors or at



*Entering her third year as a club member, Keegan is also serving as president of the OSU Block and Bridle Club.*

the end of a halter during the NJAS, she was likely fulfilling her role as junior chair of the show.

She is required to stay in the position for at least two years, and Keegan says the position is one of her “biggest undertakings.” Despite



*Being part of the Angus breed gives Keegan various opportunities to educate the public about Certified Angus Beef.*

the long-term commitment, Keegan is eager to have another chance to make connections in the Angus industry at next year’s show.

Keegan is unsure of what career path she will follow. Law school is an option for her future, and she can picture herself writing agricultural policies after finishing school.

“Keegan will do a great job in whatever she does in the future,” Jenna says. “Because of her involvement at OSU and her time as Miss American Angus, I know she’ll succeed wherever life decides to take her.”

Keegan is confident cattle will always be part of her future. Serving as Miss American Angus gave her a lifetime membership to the Angus Auxiliary, an opportunity Keegan says she is especially grateful for.

“It warms my heart to think of Keegan staying involved in the industry,” Jerry says. “I hope that she can continue with her passion for the Angus breed for years to come.”

Keegan credits her success in all her activities to the skills she was able to strengthen while serving as Miss American Angus and the involvement with other professionals in the Angus breed this provided. “My love for the Angus industry stems from my family’s involvement but has grown into my own passion,” Keegan says. “I love the cattle, the Association and people that this great industry is comprised of today.” 