



## Career Countdown

*From the handshake to the polished shoes, NJAA members show off their skills during the Career Development Contest.*

*Story & photos by Megan Silveira, editorial intern*

Firm grip, but not too tight. Confident, but not too arrogant. Assertive, but not too aggressive. All are the qualities of a great handshake.

Participants in the Career Development Contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) have mastered the art of creating a good first impression with their version of the perfect handshake.

For the 50th anniversary of the NJAS, 30 National Junior Angus

Association members participated in this contest.

### Judge's perspective

"I think it's a great thing for these kids, for future job interviews they're going to have and creating résumés," says Carla Mickey, interview contest judge from Illinois. "It's a great experience for them to know how to do this, how to make themselves better and gaining confidence."

Mickey's children exhibited at the NJAS and are a part of the Illinois Junior Angus Association. As one of the host states, the parents were asked to volunteer as judges for the competitions, a task Mickey was eager to take on.

Mickey explains how the judging panel looks for eye-catching résumés and NJAA members who stand out from the crowd. She is drawn to participants with confidence

*Above: Cale Hinrichsen putting "the perfect handshake" to use at the start of his interview.*

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and enjoys the chance to see them share their pride in their accomplishments.

Lists of achievements in and out of the show ring were not in short supply during the Career Development Contest, something Mickey and the other judges were excited to see.

"We had a lot of fun judging it," Mickey says. "It's a great experience for the kids to be able to build on creating résumés, interviews and communication skills."

### Calling all future leaders

This year's contest hosted both intermediate and senior competitors. Intermediate contestants chose or created a scholarship to "apply" for, while senior members competed for a job position of their choosing.

Résumés are submitted a few weeks before the contest, making up a portion of the judging criteria. The interview process occurs during the NJAS and is the second and final segment of the contest.

Morgan Knapp, a nine-year member of the Iowa Junior

Angus Association, has participated in this contest the past four years. This intermediate contestant is constantly drawn back to the contest because she loves the challenge of creating the perfect résumé.

Knapp explains how members must not only create a unique layout for their résumés, but they should also fill it with a list of their relevant achievements. She credits her success in the contest with the support

system she has at home.

"It's kind of a family effort when it comes to creating that résumé," Knapp says. "I have three or four people in my family who look over it and make sure we've got everything on there and that it is going to look the best."

This contest is a family event for Knapp, who was first interested in competing because of her brother's previous involvement. With her love for cattle and exposure to the

contest, Knapp is a force to be reckoned with in front of the judges' panel.

While Knapp favors the résumé, Cale Hinrichsen, member of the Kansas Junior Angus Association, says the interview is his favorite part of competing.

Hinrichsen, a senior competitor, is no stranger to the Career Development Contest or the Angus industry. He says he's been an Angus breeder since the day he was born and has been working to improve himself in the interview room since he first competed four years ago.

While he admits the hardest part of the competition is



*Morgan Knapp faces the judging panel during her interview.*

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coming up with answers on the spot, Hinrichsen loves responding to interview questions.

“I get to test my skills and see if there’s any tips they have that can help me improve,” he says.

### More than green shavings

While many NJAA members are drawn to the NJAS for a chance to exhibit their cattle, Knapp believes competitions like career development are vital to making this week-long show so special.

“It’s not just about the cattle,” Knapp says. “The NJAA is really good at preparing young leaders for their next step in life and all that they do.”

Hinrichsen acknowledges the competition as a helpful way to teach junior members how to succeed in the work force.

“I think that the career

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development contest will help me in the future. It’s an excellent basis,” he says. “It’s a way for me to improve myself and get feedback on how to perform better in an interview.”

Both contestants share similar goals. Knapp and Hinrichsen are eager to hone their skills in preparation for future interviews.

“It was a good opportunity to get to experience the career and

scholarship interviewing process,” Knapp says.

Hinrichsen says the contest has already proven to be helpful with several scholarship interviews. He believes participating in this contest helped him develop confidence.

The Career Development Contest is not only a chance for NJAA members to show off their résumés or scramble to come up with the best answers to interview questions, it is also a chance for them to learn about themselves.

Hinrichsen says it best, “I know I’m not the best. I know I may never be the best. And that’s why I’m willing to learn.”

NJAS contests teach members how to become the best versions of themselves.

And that just might start with something as simple as the perfect handshake. 🤝



*Cale Hinrichsen putting his ability to think quickly to use, formulating an answer to an interview question.*