

by Mardee Sadowsky



## Past, present and future

*“...And that is how rotational grazing affects the environment,”  
I finished. The last presentation of the school year was over!*

*“Do you have any questions?”*

“Your family raises cattle, right?” asked my teacher, who was born and raised in the city.

“Yes! My family raises registered Angus cattle,” I replied, though I wondered why he was interested.

“Registered? Does that make it easier to keep track of them?”

I smiled at this statement, but answered politely. Registered cattle versus commercial cattle could be confusing for those not raised in the cattle industry.

“Well, it does help us keep track of the herd, but owning registered cattle means so much more. By registering cattle we can track genetics and breeding lines so that we can create the ideal animal for the environment they are in. The registration paper is like a stamp of quality that increases the value of our cattle. Registering cattle also means that we are part of an association of breeders dedicated to improving the Angus breed. In fact, the American Angus Association is the largest breed association with 30,000 adult and junior members.”

“Since you’re just a junior member, do you really do that much in terms of raising cattle?” asked Megan.

“That is different for every member and every family,” I respond. “I am involved in breeding and raising

cattle, and I have a small herd of cows that I run with my family’s herd. Beginning my herd as a junior member has been very helpful. My parents can help guide me as I make breeding and management decisions. The income I make selling cattle will also help me pay for college. However, the National Junior Angus Association has more opportunities than just producing cattle. The National Junior Angus Association hosts a summer cattle show every year. However, there is a lot more to do than just exhibit show cattle! Last year I competed in public speaking on my own; as well as marketing and sales, which were team events. The National Junior Angus Show, or NJAS, has even more contests like graphic design, creative writing, and photography.”

“That sounds like a lot of fun! Are they the only association that does that?”

“No, other breeds have a national junior show too! However, the Association has the largest breed association membership, and our junior show reflects that ... It is the biggest single-breed show of the summer! Many juniors make lifelong friends at NJAS. Even though NJAS is a once-yearly show, people

often see each other at cattle shows throughout the year. In addition, the Association has many conferences and events year-round for both adults and junior members.”

“Wow ... I wish I could be involved in something like that,” Timothy said.

“Well, Tim, it does sound like a lot of work taking care of all of those show cattle,” stated Mr. Phillips.

“Mr. Phillips, it is a lot of work. But like many things in life, what you take from an experience is related to the time and work you put in. The Angus industry has taught me how to work hard for the outcome I want.”

“Do you plan to always be involved in the Angus industry?”

“I do. The Angus industry has been a big part of my life. Raising cattle has taught me how to work hard and also provided me with many leadership and scholarship opportunities. Angus cattle are a part of my family’s heritage and I want to give the gift of being involved in the Angus breed to the next generation. For many people, raising cattle is not just a job, but a lifestyle.”

“Well, class, we have certainly learned a lot. I never knew that there was such a big difference between registered cattle and commercial

cattle. I definitely have a greater appreciation for the Angus brand.”

I smiled as I took my seat. Everyone in life has different gifts and are traveling different paths. Not everyone will understand all aspects of agriculture, just like I will never understand all the aspects of a career or lifestyle that is completely foreign to me. However, the point of advocating for agriculture or Angus cattle is not to convince someone to become involved in the industry or to even

agree with my opinion. The point of advocating for agriculture is

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to establish trust between food producers and consumers. This trust enables consumers to feel confident as they purchase products from the Angus brand. By talking to

an Angus producer they know the dedication the Angus Association and its members have for producing quality products with humane practices. Advocating for agriculture will not always change someone’s beliefs or perspective, but it might make consumers more confident in the food they eat. **AJ**

*Editor’s note: This essay was submitted to the 2018 National Junior Angus Association creative writing contest. Mardee Sadowsky, Eagleville, Mo., competed in the intermediate division.*



*Mardee Sadowsky, Eagleville, Mo., led Mes Burgess Beetle 650-122 to fifth overall bred-and-owned female at the 2018 National Junior Angus Show.*