

The ULTIMATE Goal

Grant House left a lasting legacy, encouraging junior members across the country.

by Karen Hiltbrand, American Angus Association

Coincidence — or maybe a God-thing? During Cooper House's 10th year of 4-H, showing his steer at the Indiana State Fair, he was given the exhibitor number 54. To many it's just a number; but to so many more, the number 54 is a lifestyle. To Cooper, the number is symbolic of a memorial to his brother, Grant House.

Whether he knew it or not, the late Grant House of Lafayette, Ind., would forever be remembered for his attitude towards life and his 54th goal: "I will thank God for my life every day of my life."

Today, beaded bracelets adorn wrists of many walking the streets of agricultural colleges or attending National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) events and livestock shows of every species, representing those who have adopted Grant's mantra for life.

In a time where negative social media posts litter news feeds, #54 can be found sprinkled amongst the mix, all leading back to his approach to gratefulness.



“My top, top, top — like up here to the top — priority is to make friendships,” says Grant House in a promotional video about the Wabash Center. “What’s worth it is what you have done, that puts a huge smile on a lot of people’s faces.”

Growing up, Grant faced many health-related challenges due to a brain tumor he was born with; but he still lived a life focused on faith, family and unsurpassed kindness. From participating in 4-H, helping on his family’s farm and volunteering where he could, he was known across the greater Lafayette area for his ability to love people without limits.

“Grant took time every year to evaluate the who, what, when, where, and the why of his life,” says his sister, Maggie Jae Budreau.

“He wrote down 106 goals in 2015, that ranged in daily personal goals and future planning goals in benefit of his countless relationships and passion for striving towards greater independence.”

In August of 2019, a dream was brought to life. GRANT’S HOUSE officially opened its doors to the Lafayette community to honor the life of Grant Russell House, and to provide a place for individuals to congregate who share similar disabilities as his. The 55,000-square-foot facility was built by his family and the Wabash Center, in addition to countless supporters, to provide a place for individuals with special needs to gather.

“Grant beaded every day,” says Tamara House, Grant’s mother and co-founder of GRANT’S HOUSE. “He beaded to practice his gross motor skills, because he loved color and because his beaded neck and wrists became his direct route to making friends.”

Grant has influenced the lives of so many and will continue to do so in the NJAA.

THE GREENCOAT

Green jacket on, show program in hand and beads on her wrist — this was her element. Whether she was on the green chips, tailing cattle or addressing junior Angus members, Michaela Clowser, 2017-18

NJAA Board (NJAB) director, made a conscious effort to share Grant’s story because of the way he left a lasting impression on her life.

“Grant’s story gave me a sense of hope and that hope really stuck with me, so much that I wanted to share it with others,” Clowser says. “I wanted to learn more about the story and share it



GRANT’S HOUSE was made possible by Grant’s family and donors who raised \$3.6 million in just three years for the build.

with people I had met, which were family and at the time, junior Angus members.”

Clowser says the NJAA and the mission of GRANT’S HOUSE go hand in hand. They both focus on the development of our young people.

“A perspective like his doesn’t come around often, and I think that’s why his story has just skyrocketed after his passing,” she says.

Not only did she consistently have a set of beads on her wrist, but she also gifted beads to her entire junior board alongside Madison Butler, 2017-18 NJAB Chairman.

“Grant’s story grounded me — I was able to help lead the best junior breed association in the entire world,” she says. “How lucky am I? Grant’s story reminds me to thank God for that — and to thank God that we are all here doing this crazy thing together.”

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Chances are, if you glance at the wrist of a few of the NJAB members today, you will recognize the bracelet with the number 54 on them. While you're at it, pay attention to exhibitor wrists, and see how far this story has traveled.

THE JUNIOR MEMBERS

"That's what these beads are for, to remind you of Grant and the mission of GRANT'S HOUSE," says Hunter Royer, NJAA member. "And, to thank God every day for your life."

Indiana sisters Hunter and Sophie Royer hold two things especially close to their hearts — Angus cattle and Grant's story.

Currently a sophomore at McCutcheon High School and the Indiana Junior Angus Association communications director, Hunter Royer has grown up in the midst of 4-H, FFA and Junior Angus programs wearing Grant's beads. Now, she and her sister share his story with juniors across the country.

"I keep beads in my car and I always keep an extra

bracelet on my wrist, just in case someone wants a set," Royer says.


The Royer sisters have shared Grant's story with members across the country from Maryland to California. Hunter Royer also serves as a mentor in the NJAA Angus Mentoring Program (AMP). Royer says one of her favorite memories is when her mentee told her she wanted to be just like her and have her own set of beads.

"This has been three years ago and still whenever I see her show at junior nationals, she is wearing the same necklace in the ring," she says. "I just think it's really awesome, the impact Grant's story has."

Every year, Grant's family, friends and community at the Tippecanoe County Fair in Indiana make it their goal to dress all the exhibitors, judges and community members in the famous 54 beads.

"Grant has made a huge impact on my life," Royer says. "Because of him I try and live my life like tomorrow isn't promised."

With all of this in mind, the next time you see

#54 on your timeline or notice a beaded bracelet in the show ring — remember to thank God and pursue an attitude of gratefulness. Not just because it's what Grant would do; but because as Grant has shown us, love can change a family, an industry, and maybe a world. 

Editor's note: Anyone and everyone can wear Grant's beads as a reminder to be thankful. Interested in following Grant's story or supporting GRANT'S HOUSE? Follow them @grantshouse54 on Facebook and Instagram.

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