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POSTCARD FROM A JUNIOR



Jonwyn Ayres

Know yourself — Grow yourself

I am just old enough that my parents didn't have smartphones to constantly video their child. Consequently, there is only one home video from when I was a toddler.

In this video I am standing on the coffee table in the middle of the living room confidently saying, "I want to talk about bulls."

These days, I still find myself talking about four farm animals in a class at a livestock judging contest. I try every day to garner that same confidence with a little more self-awareness than the toddler video.

If you are familiar with competitive livestock judging, you probably know or even have experienced the uncertainty of going in to give a set of reasons. Standing between you and a good score are some seemingly simple variables: placing the class in an alignment in which the committee nearly agrees, providing

an accurate description and ensuring that you are memorable.

My biggest hurdle is grabbing the doorknob that can open a room to a critic or a high set. If you don't keep to your priorities, everything falls out of place. Ironically, we call this "inflating your drop," on a judging contest score.

Setbacks and disappointments of life are like that drop. The courage to make a connection with those around you and come to an agreement is a key aspect to all of life's successes. How do we all open the door to our tasks with a little more confidence, certainty and joy?

Finding a balance to ground ourselves is key. Are you grabbing the

lead on your new show heifer with confidence, or will you be timid and teach her a bad habit to get away? Are you interested in trying a new direction to take your Angus herd in, or will the new technologies leave your program in the dust?

We all need to confidently walk through the door of possibilities to bring in this new year. Don't let any setback become an inflated drop, because breeding great Angus cattle is a marathon — not a sprint. Know yourself and grow.

Happy New Years, Angus family! I am beyond excited to cheer for our breed in 2024.

— Jonwyn Ayres

Iowa State Fair Angus Show, Aug. 15, Des Moines



Pictured are Angus royalty Cheyenne Houk (left), Blakesburg, 2024 Miss Iowa Angus, and Erin Driscoll, Williamsburg, 2023 Miss Iowa Angus.

Bronze and Silver Awards

Audrey Curtin, Blue Mound, Ill.; Margaret Davis, Bidwell, Ohio; and Madison Stratton, Appomattox, Va., have earned the National Junior Angus Association's (NJAA) Bronze and Silver awards, according to Caitlyn Brandt, events and education director of the American Angus Association in Saint Joseph, Mo. Macie Bartlow, Macomb, Ill.; Sloane Curtin, Oxford, Iowa; Charles Goodnight, Billings, Mo.; Anna McCurry, Colwich, Kan.; Kara Nesom, Deridder, La.; Conner Symons, Pearl River, La.;

Tavin Symons, Pearl River, La.; Zoey Symons, Pearl River, La.; Mollie Vick, Pope, Miss.; Reese White, Grand View, Texas; and Julia Wolfe, Raymond, Neb., have earned the Bronze award.

The Bronze and Silver awards are the first two levels of the NJAA Recognition Program that began in 1972. Junior Angus breeders must apply for the awards, then meet point requirements in many areas of participation before receiving the honors. Applicants are evaluated in areas of junior Angus association activities and leadership, participation in showmanship,

contests and shows, using performance testing to improve their herd, and their progress in producing and merchandising Angus cattle.

Serving as royalty and director for the Illinois Junior Angus Association (IJAA) is **Audrey Curtin**. The 17-year-old is from Blue Mound, Ill., and attends Taylorville High School. Curtin is the daughter of T.J. and Megan Curtin.

At the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), Curtin has participated in the mentoring program and the photography, graphic design, creative writing, livestock judging and stockman's contests.

Curtin has also attended the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) and Raising the Bar conferences.

Margaret Davis, 15, is from Bidwell, Ohio. A student at Gallia Academy High School, she is the daughter of Jon Davis and is serving the Ohio Junior Angus Association as treasurer.

Davis has stepped foot in the show ring at regional, state and national events.

Sixteen-year-old **Madison Stratton** attends Cornerstone Christian Academy. Brett Stratton's daughter currently serves the Virginia Junior Angus Association as royalty.

The Appomattox, Va., native has attended the NJAS and participated in the mentoring program. She went to the Raising the Bar conference.

Thirteen-year-old **Macie Bartlow** currently attends Macomb Middle School. The Macomb, Ill., local is the daughter of Andy Bartlow.

In addition to serving the IJAA as director, Bartlow has participated in local, state and national shows. At the NJAS, she has participated in the mentoring program, poster contest and the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Cook-off.

Sloane Curtin is the 15-year-old daughter of Mindy Curtin. The Oxford, Iowa, local attends Williamsburg High School.

She has participated in shows at the state, regional and national level.

Billings, Mont., local, **Charles Goodnight** is the son of Jeff Goodnight. He is 13 years old.

Goodnight has participated in local and national shows. He has also submitted weight data to Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®).

Anna McCurry is 14 years old. The Colwich, Kan., native attends Andale High School and is the daughter of Rhonda McCurry.

At the NJAS, this Kansas junior participated in the creative writing contest, mentoring program and the Cook-off. Additionally, McCurry has attended the LEAD and Raising the Bar conferences.

She has also submitted data to AHIR.

From Deridder, La., **Kara Nesom** is Chad Nesom's daughter. The 16-year-old attends Beauregard High School and currently serves the Louisiana Junior Angus Association (LJAA) as director.

The NJAS is one of many shows the junior has attended.

A student at Creekside Junior High School, **Conner Symons** is 14 years old. Shawn and Britanee Symons' son is a member of the LJAA.

The Pearl River, La., local has participated in local and national shows, including the NJAS. He has also submitted data to the AHIR.

Conner's 12-year-old brother, **Tavin Symons**, also attends Creekside Junior High School. Along with competing in the show ring at the local, state and national level, Tavin has participated in the NJAS photography and livestock judging contests and the Cook-off.

He has submitted weight data to

AHIR and consigned cattle in a local auction.

Zoey Symons is Conner and Tavin's 17-year-old sister. The junior balances her work as a student of Pearl River High School with her role as secretary for the LJAA.

Her career in the NJAA boasts participation in the photography, livestock judging and extemporaneous speaking contests at the NJAS, as well as the Cook-off. Zoey has also attended the LEAD and Raising the Bar conferences and submitted data to AHIR.

Pope, Miss., native **Mollie Vick** is 12 years old and the daughter of Emily Vick. The Pope School attendee is a member of the Mississippi Junior Angus Association. She currently serves her state as royalty and has served as director.

At the NJAS, Vick has participated in the mentoring program and Cook-off. She also competed in the creative writing, public speaking, livestock judging and graphic design contests.

From Grandview, Texas, **Reese White** is the 13-year-old daughter of Shelby White. She currently serves as a director for the Texas Junior Angus Association.

Having participated in shows at the state and national level, White has participated in the NJAS creative writing, team fitting, auctioneering and Skill-a-thon contests, as well as the mentoring program.

Julia Wolfe is from Raymond, Neb. Cindi Wolfe's 14-year-old daughter attends Raymond Central Junior/Senior High School.

Wolfe has shown at the local, state and national level. She has participated in the quiz bowl, livestock judging and Skill-a-thon contests, as well as the mentoring program at the NJAS. 