

Up For a Challenge



Best friends share recognition as the winners of the 2003 NJAS Crystal Award.

Story & photos by **Corinne Blender**

Many juniors can relate to the time and effort it takes to get heifers, steers, bulls or cow-calf pairs ready for the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). Imagine taking on the additional responsibility of competing in the nine educational contests offered at the NJAS.

Balancing time for additional activities is a challenge that is taken seriously by Kansas juniors Emily McCurry, Burrton, and Garrett Lampe, Scott City. Both claimed the Janet Castle Crystal Award as a reward for their dedication to the educational events at the 2003 NJAS. In short, the Crystal Award is presented to a boy and a girl for accumulating the most points for participating in, and placing in, the educational contests at the NJAS.

"I looked at the schedule and memorized it before I even went," Emily says. "I knew I was going to have to go day by day and just work through it." Team sales was the only contest in which she did not participate.

Garrett only sat out of one contest as well — extemporaneous speaking. He says it is a challenge balancing everything, but he looks forward to enjoying every moment.

"You have contests in the afternoon, and you've got to work on your cattle. This year the speech contest was the same day as bred-and-owned show," Garrett says. He and his family had four bred-and-owned heifers. "You are really tired, and you try to balance everything out between your cattle and your contests, and then you still want to go out

and have a good time with your friends at night. It really starts to take a toll on you."

However, Garrett is used to a busy schedule; this is the third time he has won the Crystal Award. He says sharing the title with Emily this year is extra special.

"Emily and I have been like brother and sister since we were little kids," Garrett says. "Any time a person like that wins it, you feel just as equally happy for them as you do for yourself."

The Kansas juniors have a special bond. It's one that has cultivated many successes for the group in and out of the showing. "We are best friends. We have grown up together, and we have done pretty much everything together," Emily says of her and Garrett's friendship. But, she adds, there's more than just a duo on the Kansas team. "Jeana Sankey, Garrett Lampe and Emily McCurry — everybody knows us three as being together all the time, so it was very special to win it with him."

Encouraging others

Winning the Crystal Award has been a goal for Emily. Her mother, Mary, agrees with the way Emily described herself in her creative writing essay as a "determined competitor."

"It's not that hard-nosed, knock-down-drag-out type," Mary says. "She's kind of quiet and to herself, but boy when she gets that glint in her eye you know she is on a mission."

Even though Emily sets her goals high for her personal achievement, she still enjoys helping other juniors and encouraging them to be involved.

"All the contests are great, and I recommend all the kids get involved in them," Emily says. "I think each one shows significance in something or brings out a different characteristic in each person."

Garrett is a leader in encouraging others to get involved as well. At the 2002 NJAS he won the Outstanding Leadership Award, along with the Crystal Award, recognizing him for his dedication to leadership within the beef industry.

"Garrett is very focused on his future within the beef industry," says his mother, Anne. "In his application for the Leadership Award, he concentrated on his work in beef promotion and assisting younger kids with their projects. When he first won the Crystal Award in 1999, he set that goal early — as soon as the new award was announced.

► Garrett Lampe (left) and Emily McCurry are best friends who have shared many good times together through their involvement with Angus. They shared another special moment when they were named the boy and girl winners of the Janet Castle Crystal Award at the 2003 NJAS.

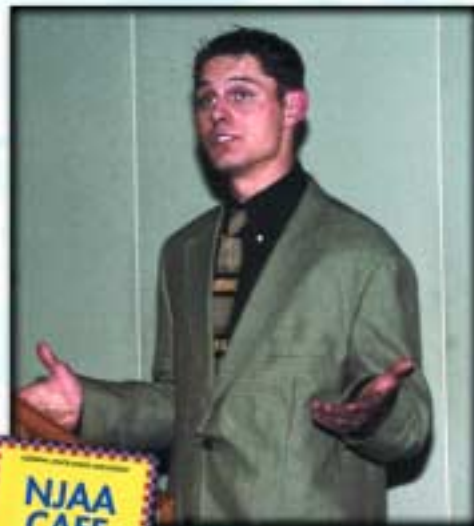


PHOTO BY GARRETT WILKERSON

► **Left:** Emily carefully balances competing in the showing and competing in educational contests. She says she memorized the schedule so she would know where she needed to be at all times.

► **Right:** Garrett's first love may be showing his cattle, but he still finds time to compete in the other contests offered at the junior show. This is the third time he has taken home the Crystal Award.

► **Below:** Emily and Garrett compete in nearly all of the contests at the NJAS. Contests such as photography and graphic design are done in advance, allowing them to focus on their cattle and the contests held during the weeklong show.



Garrett is very driven when he wants to accomplish something. He is good at multi-tasking."

Getting involved may seem like a daunting task for some juniors, especially if it is their first trip to the NJAS. Emily says there are contests that allow a person to get involved without requiring hours of extra time.

"I would recommend the extemporaneous speaking contest for a first-time junior member. The National Junior Angus Show in itself can be overwhelming," Emily points out. "If a junior member says, 'Here are some issues of the *Angus Journal*. You might look over those and take them into the extemporaneous room.' Then they can prepare for the contest. It takes 45 minutes out of their time, and they don't have to prepare in advance like some of the other contests. Coming and seeing 1,600 head of cattle and 600 or so junior members — it's ... wow."

The contests can teach juniors about themselves and their abilities.

"The prepared speech contest has taught me the most about my abilities because it really opened me up to being comfortable with talking to people in public and answering questions on the spot and just working hard to get something that you want to get done," Garrett says.

Special people

Both Garrett and Emily have a great support system that allows them to stay focused on their goals and abilities to succeed.

"My mom has been so supportive the whole time. If I ever needed help on anything, she was right there to help me," Garrett says. "She comes up with some good ideas, and together we have come up with something pretty good."

In addition to his mom, dad and brother,

Garrett gives credit for support to the whole St. Blanc (his mother's) family, including those in Louisiana and Mississippi. "We have all been real supportive of each other, not only in the contests, but in showing cattle and all that," he says.

"Having won the Crystal Award three times is very special to Garrett," Anne says, adding that both Garrett and Clayton have her and their father, Mark's, complete support.

Emily's mother and her father, Andy, offer a lot of support when she is preparing a speech, putting together a poster, writing an essay or working on any other contest.

"Sometimes there is give and take, but it is always her idea," Mary says of Emily. "She has an idea of where she wants to go with things, and so we will huddle at the computer and then we will run it by Andy and ask, 'What do you think?'"

Garrett says the Crystal Award is a very special trophy to have on display at his home. He does the competitions for the love of it. "The cattle are Garrett's first priority," Anne says. "However, public speaking and team sales are something he is very interested in. In recent years the poster and graphic design contests have interested him since he is contemplating studying ag communications, probably as a minor degree."

The importance of the award to both Emily and Garrett is exactly what the American Angus Auxiliary hoped for when

they announced this award would be available beginning in 1999.

"The year I was Auxiliary president, we started the Crystal Award with some money that had been left with a former president. We were thinking about how to promote educational events," Mary recalls. "It is just amazing when you offer a little notoriety. It's no money. It's just that notoriety. The competition in those contests just bloomed

after that."

As more juniors get involved, the strength of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) will continue to grow. The educational contests cultivate Angus juniors into strong leaders.

"Participating in the educational contests has expanded his knowledge of the industry and has helped him to share that knowledge with others," Anne says, pointing out Garrett's experiences. "Each contest helps to strengthen his skills in communication, both oral and visual."

Meeting new friends has also been possible through competing in the contests, Emily says. It allows juniors to experience their organization on the national level.

"Half the kids I know today I wouldn't know just by showing cows because you don't really get to talk in the showing," Emily says, adding there is more interaction while waiting to compete in the other contests. "I've gotten to know some people really well just by competing in the contests or even just going and watching them."

While the NJAS is a busy week, Emily and Garrett say they both enjoy the thrill of competition and look forward to it next year.

Mary says, "It is an intense week, especially if you are showing. Those kids hardly get to take a breath."

