

# A Cut Above the Rest

Fourteen junior members have what it takes  
to stand out among their peers.

by *Cara Bieroth*; sketches by *Doneta Brown*

In 1972 the American Angus Association established the National Junior Recognition Program (NJRP). Its purpose was to recognize members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) who exhibited leadership and achievement above all others. Members were eligible to receive Bronze and Silver awards. The 1980-1981 NJAA Board of Directors, along with the Junior Activities Department, later developed the third, most prestigious award, and the highest form of recognition — the Gold Award.

These 14 young men and women earned Bronze and Silver awards before applying for the Gold Award in their final year of eligibility. They were required to keep accurate records of their achievements to qualify for these emblems, for which they spent years competing in the showing, utilizing performance testing, and producing and marketing their cattle. They are individuals who exude leadership and confidence while promoting and contributing to the Angus industry. They are truly a cut above the rest.

## Callie Birdsell

Callie Birdsell, Sparta, N.C., fondly remembers her years as a junior Angus member.

"When I look back on my childhood, Angus involvement is the highlight of my summers," Callie says. "The friends that I have made will be lifetime friends, and the connections that I have



made through the industry will assist in developing my own herd of cattle."

Callie has been an active member of the NJAA and the North Carolina Junior Angus Association, for which she served as the vice president, secretary and western director before securing the presidency in 2002 and 2003. In 2001 she was the North Carolina Angus Queen and a NJAA scholarship winner. In 2002 she represented her state association as a voting delegate at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Milwaukee, Wis., and participated in the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference.

Throughout the years, she has competed in numerous contests, taking first place in the 2002 NJAS extemporaneous speaking contest. She also competed on the first-place quiz bowl teams in 1999 and 2000. At the NJAS this year, Callie was honored with the Outstanding Leadership Award.

"Agriculture has been an integral part of my life and will continue to be so," she says.

Callie currently attends North Carolina State University and is studying ag communications. The daughter of Ed Birdsell and Jane and Rick Gardner, she plans to graduate in May 2004.

## Kyle Conley

Kyle Conley, Clarksdale, Mo., takes a lot of pride in his Angus herd and the fact that he has built it from the ground up.

"I pretty much built my herd the old-fashioned way — I bred



them, raised them and showed them," he says. Exhibiting his cattle as a junior member is a rewarding experience for Kyle.

"I have always bred cattle that will perform, function and, most of all, make me money. Being able to show them is just a plus," Kyle says. "Exhibiting cattle has been a way for me to advertise and measure my program against others and, most of all, create a network of friends and potential customers. I am proud of the cattle that I have, and that I have managed to be competitive in the showing."

Kyle is a competitive showman, taking champion showmanship honors at state and regional shows. In 2001 he represented Missouri at the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest, receiving an honorable mention. At this year's NJAS show in Louisville, Ky., Kyle was elected to the NJAA Board of Directors.

"A major part of my life growing up has been in the Angus business," Kyle says. "I hope to make my life a major part of the future of the Angus business."

The son of Bill and Donna Conley, Kyle will be attending Oklahoma State University this fall, majoring in animal science with a business option.

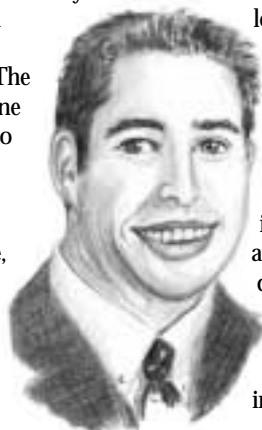
## Celeste Diacon

"Being involved in the Angus Association has helped me grow as an individual," says Celeste Diacon, Boynton, Okla. The experience that Celeste has gotten from the NJAA is irreplaceable.

"I have to work with the public daily, and without the experience that this association has brought me, I wouldn't be so outgoing," she says. "When I was growing up, I was a very shy person. Through this association I have gone from sitting at the back of meetings, talking to no one, to sitting at the front as secretary of our junior association."

Along with people skills, Celeste has learned discipline while showing her cattle.

"It all starts at home with the preparations you make," says the daughter of Glenn and Kathy Diacon. "Your hard work will show out in the ring. In the end, it gives me a feeling of reward and achievement." Her efforts definitely paid off in 1999 when she brought home a first-place ribbon from the NJAS. She has also placed at the top of her class in local and regional shows.



In 2000 Celeste served her state association as secretary. She was also an Oklahoma scholarship winner. She competed in the NJAA/*Angus Journal* Photography Contest and the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Cook-Off competition at the 2000 NJAS. Celeste is now attending cosmetology school.

"Over the years my herd has grown and will keep growing. Knowing that you can take great genetics and make great offspring is rewarding in itself," she says.

### Emily Hogberg

Emily Hogberg, Mason, Mich., became involved in the NJAA with the encouragement of an older junior member and close friend, who helped guide her through her first couple of years. With this inspiration, Emily continued to exhibit her cattle while being an active participant in her state association.

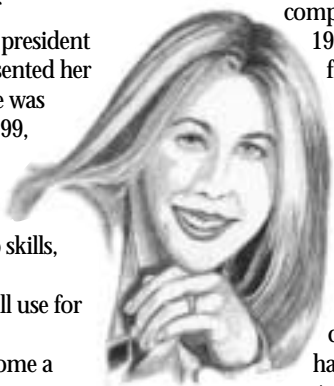
In 1996 she placed second in the team sales competition, and in the past four years she has competed in the Cook-Off contest, taking home two first-place awards as well as a second and a third placing.

Emily has been a leader in her state association, holding the offices of reporter/historian, secretary, vice president and president. She has also represented her state at the LEAD conference. She was the Michigan Angus Queen in 1999, an NJAS voting delegate and a scholarship winner.

"Being a junior member has allowed me to develop leadership skills, such as organizational skills and communication skills, which I will use for the rest of my life," she says. "The association has helped me to become a leader, while at the same time being involved has prepared me to be more willing to assume leadership roles."

Emily enjoyed the opportunities she was given to learn about the beef industry and to travel and share this knowledge with other juniors and Angus producers. She credits the NJAA for giving her these experiences.

"My involvement in the NJAA has introduced me to and taught me much more about the beef industry. Without getting involved in the cattle business and Angus associations, I would have never had



the opportunity to meet and talk with beef representatives from across the country," she says. "I now take every opportunity I can to promote the beef industry, especially the Angus business."

The daughter of Maynard and Anne Hogberg, Emily is pursuing a dual major in finance and animal science at Michigan State University. She plans to attain her master's degree before pursuing a career in the livestock industry as a loan officer or a financial planner.

### Jennifer Johnson

At a young age, Jennifer Johnson, Tompkinsville, Ky., and her brother were told that if they became involved in the NJAA, things would happen for them. She and her brother then took that first step and became NJAA members. Now, 11 years later, she couldn't agree more.

"The NJAA has opened many doors for me," Jennifer says. "I have made friendships all over the country and memories that will last a lifetime. From being involved in such a prestigious cattle association, I learned many of life's lessons."

Jennifer attended her first NJAS in Columbus, Ohio, where she realized the true extent of the good advice she had been given. From that point forward, she began competing in photography, poster design, speech, Cook-Off, and team sales

competitions. From 1992 to 1995, she consistently took first place in the poster contests. In 1995 Jennifer swept public speaking, photography and poster competitions. In 1996 she placed first in the Cook-Off and in public speaking. "I won my first poster contest at the age of 9 and have continued doing posters throughout the years.

These contests have given me a leg up in my educational progress. After being given many opportunities to present my speeches in front of a crowd, my college public speaking class was a breeze."

Jennifer has served on the Kentucky Junior Angus Association board as a reporter and a director. She also received an NJAA scholarship, a Kentucky Junior Angus Association scholarship and the Kentucky Junior Angus Association Leadership Award. She is a proficient showman, placing at the

top of showmanship classes at local and state shows.

Jennifer will graduate from Western Kentucky University in May 2005 with a degree in pre-law. Upon graduation she plans to go on to law school. She is the daughter of Ken and Karen Johnson.



### Jodi Loudin

Being a member of the NJAA has given Jodi Loudin, Linn, W.Va., many wonderful opportunities to learn and grow.

"I've gotten to meet so many great people and learned lots of new things," Jodi says. "I have not only

learned a sense of responsibility from showing cattle, but also a knowledge of how to care for an animal and how to listen to the new ideas of other young breeders."

With the help of her aunt and uncle, Jodi has established her herd by learning how to selectively choose the best bulls to sire her heifers. She has seen her efforts pay off in the showing, taking top honors in 1999 at the West Virginia Breeder Show and third place at the Eastern Regional Junior Angus Show with her bred-and-owned cattle. In the same year, she represented West Virginia in the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest.

Jodi takes time to get involved outside of the showing as well. In 2000 the daughter of Claudia Doss and Donald Loudin represented West Virginia as the state Angus queen. She was a voting delegate during the 2002 NJAS, and she attended LEAD in 1998 and 2002. She was also a participant in the Cook-Off competition.

While staying active as a junior member, Jodi also worked hard in 4-H and FFA. She took advantage of these opportunities to use her Angus cattle as projects for both organizations. "Being a part of all these diverse agriculture-related organizations has given me choices as I better my education in an agriculture-related field," she says.

Jodi is entering her third year at Glenville State College, where she is majoring in environmental science.

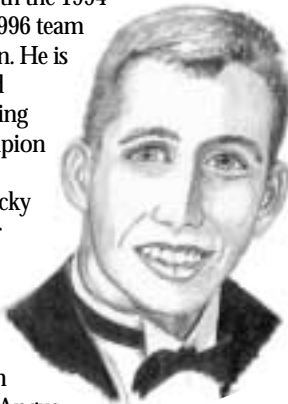
"I hope to work with the National Research Council (NRC) or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help keep our farms around so young and old breeders will have the same opportunities that I have had," she says.

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**Kristopher Lynn**

Being a member of the NJAA has been very rewarding for Kristopher Lynn, Springfield, Ky. "The fun and knowledge I have gained through this junior association are far greater than any other group or organization I have belonged to," he says. "Taking part in this association has helped to sculpt me into the individual I am today."

Kristopher has been very competitive throughout his NJAA career. He took home third place in both the 1994 Cook-Off and 1996 team sales competition. He is an accomplished showman, winning numerous champion showmanship honors at Kentucky state fairs, junior Angus preview shows, and junior beef expos, and in 2000, the Eastern Regional Junior Angus Show.



Kristopher uses artificial insemination (AI) to improve the genetics of his cow herd. "To stay competitive in the showing, I had to utilize certain tools to improve my herd," says the son of Danny and Melisa Lynn. "After completing the necessary course, I put to work the leading genetic-valued bulls and a clear-cut difference was proven as my herd drastically improved, not only genetically but in phenotype as well."

His bred-and-owned cattle have proven themselves in the showing, winning reserve champion at the Eastern Regional and at the NJAS in 2000.

The NJAA isn't the only organization in which Kristopher excels. In the Kentucky state FFA, he was named Star Green Hand, Chapter Star Farmer, State Star Farmer and American Star Farmer. "All of these awards stemmed from my Angus herd," he says.

Kristopher has taken an active role in the Kentucky Junior Angus Association, serving as president in 2001. He participated at the LEAD conference in 1999 and in 2000, the same year he was a voting delegate at the NJAS. In 2001, he received Kentucky Angus Association and NJAS scholarships. "The longer I was a member of the NJAA, the more involved I wanted to become," he says.

Kristopher will graduate from Western Kentucky University with a degree in agribusiness and business administration.

**Angela Miller**

Angela Miller, Luckey, Ohio, says her most fulfilling memories have come from participating in showmanship contests.

"I have enjoyed the challenges and opportunities that showmanship events offer, including winning three times at the Ohio State Fair and twice at the Ohio Junior Preview Show." At the 2002 NJAS, she received an honorable mention. Angela has also been successful in the showing, showing both her owned and bred-and-owned cattle. She has competed in Ohio state fairs and junior preview shows, as well as the NJAS.

Angela's 11-year NJAA career has given her the opportunity to travel to many places and to meet many new people. She has taken an active role in her state association, serving as treasurer from 1998 through 2001. She was honored in 2000 as the Ohio Angus Queen. "I had the privilege of representing Ohio as the host state for the Eastern Regional Junior Angus Show, as well as representing Ohio at the NJAS in Iowa," she says.

Being a NJAA member has had a very positive impact in Angela's life. "Through the responsibilities given to me, I have developed good work habits resulting in many personal rewards and I have gained satisfaction and knowledge breeding and raising Angus cattle for show and sale, earning honors at state-level shows," she says.

The daughter of Daniel and Catherine Miller, she currently attends Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio. She is pursuing a degree in ag business and plans to graduate in spring 2005.

"Angus cattle have always been a part of my life, and I plan to remain involved with the family Angus business," she says.

**Rebecca Tautfest Nida**

"Angus cattle are my life and its people are my family," says Rebecca Tautfest Nida, Red



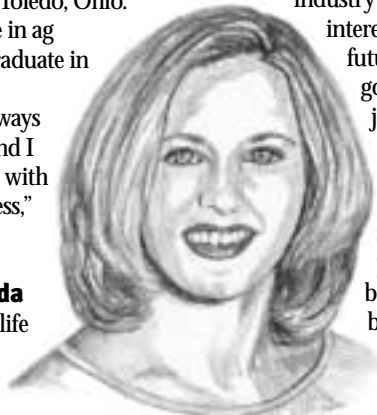
Rock, Okla. "Being raised on an Angus cattle and wheat farm, and experiencing a broad range of activities such as liberal arts, athletics, leadership, community service and agricultural organizations, has given me the opportunity to become a well-rounded young person."

The daughter of Brenda Tautfest, Rebecca has been exceptionally active in numerous organizations, including 4-H, FFA, Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT), Collegiate Farm Bureau, Collegiate CattleWomen and the Oklahoma Junior Cattlemen's Association. She has excelled in all areas in which she is interested, holding numerous offices and playing main roles in activities and programs. She also believes in the importance of education, making the Oklahoma State University Dean's List, completing classes in the university's honor's program, and joining the National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS) and the Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society.

For Rebecca's NJAA participation, she has attended the LEAD conference and received Angus Foundation and Auxiliary scholarships. She is also active in showing her cattle, winning reserve and grand champion honors at national, state and regional shows. She takes an active role in managing and maintaining her cattle. Her 56 registered Angus cattle are enrolled in the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program.

"I use artificial insemination exclusively on my females and maintain strict vaccination and breeding schedules for my herd," she says. "I am involved in management decisions on my family's farm, including feed rations, AI breeding and managing show and sale cattle.

"Through the years, I have acquired a love for the Angus breed and the agricultural industry that far outweighs my other interests. Therefore, in planning my future, I have agriculture-related goals," Rebecca adds. "I will be a junior at Oklahoma State University in the fall of 2003, majoring in agricultural communications, with minors in theatre arts and political science. I hope to become involved in broadcasting, working either behind the scenes or on camera."



## Lacey Robinson

"The NJAA has taken me places I never imagined I could go," says Lacey Robinson, Wellsville, Mo., who just retired as leadership director of the NJAA Board. "I will forever be grateful for the travel opportunities I've had to meet breeders and other juniors from across the country."

Her travel experiences extend further than her time on the junior board. In 2001 she reigned as Miss American Angus, which sent her to Angus shows across the country to represent the breed.

Lacey also served the Missouri Junior Angus Association as its president in 1999. In 2002 she was a CAB scholarship recipient. "The (Angus) Foundation and CAB scholarships have helped make it possible for me to continue my college education," she acknowledges.

Lacey has participated in several NJAS events. She took home first- and second-place awards in team sales in 1995 and 1998, respectively. In 1999 she placed second in team sales and third in extemporaneous speaking. She participated in the quiz bowl competition in 2001.

"I have gained a great deal of knowledge from the different programs within the NJAA," she explains. "Perhaps the greatest gifts this organization will impart upon me are that of lifelong friendships, wonderful memories, and a deep love of the Angus business and the great people within it."

"I plan to graduate in May of 2004 with a bachelor's degree in animal science and a minor in business," she says. "I would like to pursue a career in agribusiness, hopefully within some facet of the beef industry, while continuing to build my Angus and commercial cattle herd."

Lacey is the daughter of Allen and Stephanie Robinson.

## Rebecca Scharpe

Rebecca Scharpe, Arlington, Minn., clearly remembers the day her father showed her the newspaper article announcing her membership into the NJAA.

"I didn't even know I had joined," she says. "I also didn't know what I would do as a



member, except that now I could show at the big shows."

Rebecca has come a long way since that announcement in the local paper. Now in her last year as a junior member, the daughter of James and Myrna Scharpe can fully see what she has accomplished.

"I have gained so many things from my involvement in the Minnesota and the National Junior Angus associations. In my state, I sharpened my leadership skills by serving various officer positions," Rebecca states. "I had the opportunity to become involved in writing our state bylaws and constitution, and I was able to help develop new director positions and contests for the members. I also had the opportunity to serve as Miss Minnesota Angus for two years."

Rebecca has taken advantage of many opportunities the NJAA has to offer. She has been a voting delegate and competed in



nearly all contests offered at the NJAS.

Participating in the mentor program at NJAS and working with youth have greatly affected her. "One of the more rewarding activities within the association has been working with and encouraging younger members," she says. "I love to see their

determination in the showing, even when their show heifers are misbehaving. I am at the point where I've actually been able to see younger members grow and become more active in the association.

"The skills I learned throughout my participation have benefited me throughout my time in college and will continue into the future," she says. "I will graduate from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, in 2004 with a bachelor of art's degree in nursing. I know that wherever my future takes me, Angus cattle have a place in that future."

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## NJAA members earn Bronze and Silver awards

The Bronze and Silver awards are the first two levels of the National Junior Recognition Program (NJRP), which the American Angus Association began in 1972. To receive these honors, junior Angus members must apply for the awards and meet point requirements in many areas of participation.

Applicants are evaluated for their participation in junior Angus association activities, showmanship and leadership events; use of performance testing to improve their herds; and progress in producing and merchandising Angus cattle.

While the Bronze and Silver awards are presented to members throughout the year, Angus Productions Inc. (API) publishes summaries of the award winners in the May and September youth-focused issues of the *Angus Journal*. James Fisher, director of activities and junior activities for the American Angus Association, announced the following award winners since publication of the May 2003 issue.

### Bronze and Silver awards

**InaBeth Donaldson**, 14, Grandview, Texas. She is the daughter of Phil and Elizabeth Donaldson.

**Andrew Miller**, 19, Luckey, Ohio. He is the son of Daniel and Catherine Miller.

**Brady Quam**, 18, Lodi, Wis. He is the son of Terry and Ardel Quam.

**Megin Santee**, 18, Langdon, Kan. She is the daughter of Barry and Karen Santee.

**Peter Scharpe**, 17, Arlington, Minn. He is the son of James and Myrna Scharpe.

**Amanda Stai**, 20, New London, Minn. She is the daughter of Gary and Kathy Stai.

**Krista Stai**, 18, New London, Minn. She is the daughter of Gary and Kathy Stai.

### Silver Awards

**Chad Hahn**, 18, Rocky Ridge, Md. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Chester Kerns and Lewis Hahn Jr.

**Katy Kemp**, 18, Decatur, Texas. She is the daughter of Thomas and Evie Kemp.

**Katelyn Scharpe**, 18, Arlington, Minn. She is the daughter of James and Myrna Scharpe.

—compiled by **Corinne Blender**

**Jessica Schmidt**

"As an NJAA member, I have had the opportunity to meet many fellow Angus breeders who have encouraged me to improve my cattle, as well as guided and encouraged me to participate in various contests," says Jessica Schmidt, Drumore, Pa. The daughter of Pete and Laurie Schmidt has exhibited her cattle in many state and regional shows, winning top awards at numerous events. "I have had the opportunity to travel to different states, participating in regional and national shows."

In 2000 Jessica received a Pennsylvania Angus Association scholarship and represented her state as the Pennsylvania Angus Queen. The knowledge that she has gained through different aspects of the NJAA is something that she intends to pass on to other members. "The programs offered at several shows have helped me to learn more about the cattle industry, and I feel I can share my knowledge with younger Angus breeders, to help them with their cattle," she says.

"In the future, I intend to continue raising quality Angus cattle and to encourage 4-H and FFA youth to join the NJAA because of the education and fun that I have experienced throughout the 10 years I have had Angus cattle," Jessica adds.

Jessica plans to graduate from Penn State in May 2004 with a degree in animal science and agribusiness.

**Ben Winsor**

"A lifetime of memories and the brightest future possible — that is how I would describe my membership of the NJAA," says Ben Winsor, Grantville, Kan. "It is hard to put into words the memories, enthusiasm and future that the NJAA has provided."

At age 10, Ben began his career with the NJAA, knowing nothing and no one. Getting involved in Angus shows, he began meeting people. "I built strong relationships with those from my own district, then from my state, then from people around the nation."

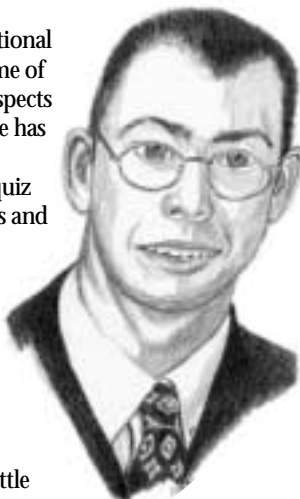
State and national contests are some of Ben's favorite aspects of the NJAA. He has competed in salesmanship, quiz bowl, team sales and Cook-Off competitions. He took home first in the national team sales competition in 2001 and 2002.

"Showing cattle takes a lot more labor than one person can endure. However, contests such as salesmanship and quiz bowl are opportunities that one can reap themselves," Ben says. "This is a large part of why I like participating at shows, because I can get involved with something of which everyone has had to work for equally."

"The junior Angus association has also been a large player in constructing my leadership abilities," says the son of Russell and Patricia Winsor. "Watching my older peers step up and take on challenges has been one of my most important learning experiences, and later, some of the most rewarding times of my life as I followed in their footsteps." He demonstrated his leadership skills while serving as the Kansas Junior Angus Association secretary in 2000 and again in 2002.

Ben will graduate from Kansas State University in May 2005. After graduation, he hopes to work for a promotional organization or a sales management firm.

He says, "The NJAA has taught me skills that I can utilize as I venture throughout my life; that is how much the lessons learned really mean."



**Amy Wolfrey**

"My time in the NJAA has been a life-changing experience," says Amy Wolfrey, Frederick, Md. "There is no doubt in my mind that I would be a different person had I not had the opportunity to be involved in this association."

In 2002 Amy was elected to represent Maryland on the NJAA Board of Directors, which she considers her most significant achievement. Prior to this, she served as the Maryland Junior Angus Association secretary and reporter. She also represented Maryland as a voting delegate in 1999 and 2000 and as the Maryland Angus Queen in 1999. She was a Maryland scholarship winner and attended the LEAD conference from 1997 to 2002.

"The single most influential event for me was my first LEAD conference," she says. She returned from that conference with more self-confidence and a mission to make a difference in the lives of those around her.

She has taken advantage of NJAS contests, participating in the photography, quiz bowl and speech contests. She has excelled in the showing as well, placing high in national, state and local shows.

"The opportunities I have received from my involvement have been considerable," she says, "and I only hope my efforts to give back have been a mirror of how grateful I am."

It is through leadership that Amy gives back to the organization that has given her so much. "I have thrown myself into serving through leadership, involving myself in committees and committing myself to the responsibilities that come with the officer positions I have been voted into," she says.

The daughter of Dan and Judith Wolfrey, Amy will graduate from Oklahoma State University in May 2004 with a degree in animal science with a biotechnology emphasis.



**Editor's Note:** For information concerning the NJRP and the Gold Award, contact the Junior Activities Department at the American Angus Association.