

A Thread of Inspiration

Junior Angus advisors ensure that members receive the best experience possible.

Story & photos by *Cara Bieroeth*

They are the “behind the scenes” people — the people who take little credit, but possess a responsibility that is crucial to the efficiency and success of their respective organizations. State junior Angus association advisors are the threads that hold their organizations together.

James Fisher, director of activities and junior activities for the American Angus Association, composed a list of the expected roles and duties of a state junior Angus advisor. We present the items on his list in italics, followed by comments from a few of the pros.

The duties of state junior association advisors will vary somewhat for each state, although the basic responsibilities and requirements will remain the same.

Several factors determine the level of responsibility and commitment that advisors make, Fisher says. These factors can include a state’s geographic attributes, member involvement and available activities. Advisors work within the means of their states, large or small, but always toward the same goal.

► Kentucky junior advisor Bud Smith serves steak to juniors and their families during the Grote Texas-style dinner. Advisors from across the country were on hand to help.

► **Below:** Advisors of the Year, Julie and Frank Feeser, Taneytown, Md., accept their award from James Fisher, director of activities and junior activities.



“Geographically, Tennessee is a long, narrow state,” says Kelley Rowlett, Hurricane Mills, Tenn. “Our biggest challenge is ensuring that we reach all members throughout the state, from Memphis to Bristol, and all points between.”

“I think larger states spend more time organizing kids, making sure they are at contests and stalls, and places that they need to be,” says Kathi Creamer, Montrose, Colo.

“But I think that that is the only difference, because we are all there to help the kids with whatever they need, whether it is showing their cattle or participating in the contests. I look at some of the bigger states and wish we were there, but you work with what you have.”

Junior advisors should possess a youthful attitude with a willingness to give of themselves for the betterment of the next generation.

Giving of themselves may be one of the greatest things advisors can do for their members, Fisher says. They are a constant source of support and encouragement.

“I always tell our junior members, ‘I am

here for you, if you need any help or any guidance.’” says Julie Feeser, Taneytown, Md. “And some ask and some do not.” Julie and her husband, Frank, were named Advisors of the Year at the 2003 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in honor of their dedication to making a difference in the Maryland junior Angus program.

Creamer says, “I spend a lot of time being a cheerleader, cheering and encouraging my kids to go off and meet other kids and to participate in contests that are going on.”

Junior advisors serve as teachers to the junior membership. They provide inspiration and enthusiasm for what the juniors are doing.

Advisors strive to educate members so they know what is available to them, Fisher says.

“You can’t make a kid participate if they don’t want to,” says advisor Tina Jagers, Sulphur Bluff, Texas. “All it will do is drive them farther away. We try to make it fun for them and something that they want to do, not something that they have to do.”

“As advisors, we want the kids to know what is out there for them and that everything is for them,” she continues. “Our main role in preparing them is to educate the kids so there are no surprises when they get to the national show.”

“We have a new Web site, www.tnjangus.com, which is a terrific tool for getting information to our juniors,” Rowlett says. “They can access information from the site about the National recognition program, state queen and princess applications, upcoming events and that sort of thing. It has been a really valuable tool for us.”

“We try to get to all of the events that we possibly can that the kids are participating in,” says Kathy Wilson, Orleans, Ind. “Every morning we try to get down the aisles with a ‘Good morning. How are things going? Any problems that we need to be aware of? General encouragement is our major role.”

“We try to keep everyone upbeat,” Julie says. “We try to encourage members to participate in some of the other contests and to help instill pride in their exhibits.”

“It is no different than being a coach for a little league team,” Frank adds. “One challenge is to get them to set some kind of direction or goal that they want to accomplish every year.”

Junior advisors are a key communication link between the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), the state association, the state auxiliary and the state junior association members. It is the role of the advisor to help inform the junior

membership of activities, events and opportunities for involvement on local, state, regional and national levels.

Advisors utilize several forms of communication to make sure all corners of their states stay connected. Keeping members informed is fundamental to the success of a state association, Fisher says.

"Once we get the [NJAS entry] report from the American Angus Association, we mail newsletters to those juniors, announcing the theme for our state and reminding them of any particular item they need to bring with them to the show," Rowlett says. "This year we had more entries than usual, so we had more pedigree signs made, which is a good problem to have. Phone calls to each exhibitor were made to get an accurate count and specific information for the signs.

"I think correspondence and communication is the most important thing we, as advisors, do for our organization," she adds.

"I write a lot of news blurbs to make sure that the kids are at the meetings and that type of thing," says Robin Dehaven, Winchester, Va. "I help with making sure the communication level is there with the newsletters, photos and phone calls."

Junior advisors should encourage new ideas for the organization. The state junior association should update, change and develop programs that meet the needs of the membership it serves.

"We make sure that from the time that we have our annual meeting in December, all the way through our preview show in June, that kids are aware of the other opportunities that they have besides just the showing," Wilson says. "We try to encourage them to do the photography, make some posters; even if you can't go to the show, you have these other opportunities."

Julie says her state developed programs outside of the showing to bring the group together. "We have poster, photography, creative writing and graphic design contests at our preview show to get the juniors familiar with the programs. We even have team sales and quiz bowl at times.

"The showing can pull people apart as well as push them together in some cases," she continues.

Once you get the juniors out of the showing and into situations where they can do other fun group activities, you take the competition out of it — they learn, and they start to appreciate each other, rather than what they carry out of the showing, Julie says. "It has taken a while, but we are working in that direction and everyone in the group is working to build camaraderie."

Junior advisors should oversee the organization of the state junior association activities and events. However, the junior advisor should not do the work for the juniors, as the planning and coordination of these events is a learning experience for the juniors.

"Our officers who make up the executive committee really do the bulk of the decision-making," Rowlett says.

"We are just here to advise and to help them organize."

"We really try to facilitate the juniors," Jagers says. "We have a good set of officers, so we just try to assist them in their decisions in the meetings and so forth."

Jagers points out that there are certain things juniors can't actually do, such as reserve facilities and pay bills. The adults facilitate these responsibilities.

Junior advisors should serve as a sounding board, the "go to" person when hard decisions must be made by the state junior association. Junior advisors should draw on their experience and the experience of others to advise the juniors in their decision making.

"At the NJAS, we try to attend events and glean ideas because it helps me as an advisor the next year to be able to help a member by saying, 'Well, why don't you try it like this,'" Julie says. "Or if they bring a poster to me, I can give them suggestions from what I have seen, such as reminding them to add a contact person."

Lastly, junior advisors cannot always be a "friend" of the junior members. The advisor must help establish the perimeters for the organization and its membership. The advisor must promote discipline and organizational structure for the betterment of the total association.

Advisors work hard to conduct their members in a way that will be most beneficial to the association, Fisher says. They act as both mediators and officiators.

"I am motivated as an advisor by the knowledge and responsibility of making kids see how things should be done, not just going to the show and goofing off," Dehaven says. "It is someplace where you are supposed to learn and you are supposed to meet people and make friends that will last a lifetime. There also needs to be a team effort. I told the kids that if they want something, they will have work at it. Team participation



► It is standing room only as Fisher addresses a room full of advisors during the annual advisors' meeting Tuesday morning.



► Tennessee advisor Kelley Rowlett performs a skit during the adult competition of the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American Certified Angus Beef® Cook-Off competition. Rowlett and other Tennessee advisors participated in hopes of persuading Tennessee juniors to get involved in the activity.

and effort is really my driving force. Kids need to get something out of it in the end."

"State advisors ensure that the contest teams are signed up and the kids are participating and involved in the various activities and events," Fisher says. "They take information that we distribute at the advisors' meeting at NJAS, as well as materials we distribute to states throughout the year by other means. They do their part to encourage or coordinate the state's participation in the events."

"In the end, it's all worth it," Rowlett says. "If it is something that our children enjoy doing, and we can help them in any way, then that is what we as parents and advisors want to do. It does take a lot of time, but it is time spent with our kids, our most valuable asset."

