

Crystal Achievement

Iowa and Kansas youth are given highest awards for overall standings in educational competitions.

by Corinne Patterson

They are coveted awards sought by those with many talents. The Janet Castle Crystal awards are presented to a girl and a boy for their achievements in the educational contests at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

The 2004 Crystal Award winners are Landi McFarland, Ellston, Iowa, and Parker Rayl, Hutchinson, Kan. Garnering this award requires youth to be well-versed

in Angus knowledge, design skills, salesmanship and many other talents.

McFarland participated in several of the contests, but the trick to her success wasn't volume in entries, it was attention to detail.

"I don't just enter something to enter it. If I do it, I want it done well," McFarland says, pointing out her highest-placing poster might have only received third, but she spent hours on perfecting its look.

Her parents, David and Joy McFarland, say because of the high standards she sets for herself, they knew she would seek the top award. But being a winner for her isn't measured through first-place finishes.

"Back at home, Landi's true personality showed when she told us that Tara's mom said Tara wanted to be 'just like Landi,'" McFarland's parents say, explaining that Tara is an Iowa Angus junior who looks up to

McFarland and her many leadership roles. "This simple statement meant more to Landi than all of the awards earned at the show — because it meant she was touching someone's life in a positive way."

This was McFarland's last year in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), but it won't be the end of her Angus experience. Her family's operation, Hoover Angus Farm, is celebrating its 76th anniversary, and her dream is to return to her Iowa farm to continue her family's tradition. She and her mother already share responsibilities for handling the data collection and the marketing and sale book creation for their 500-head registered Angus cow herd.

McFarland says she knows it takes hard work to be successful and remembers this quote from Vidal Sassoon when she faces challenges:

"The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary."

"This quote is very true in my life," McFarland says. "Hard work goes into everything I do — from farm work to school work to leadership roles in many organizations."

She says she hopes other

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► **Above:** Parker Rayl (right), Hutchinson, Kan., competes in the Cook-Off with Miles Pearson, Scott City, Kan., and other team members. Rayl says he couldn't have won the Crystal Award without his talented teammates.

► **Right:** Landi McFarland, Ellston, Iowa, takes pride in each contest in which she competes, which helped her win the Crystal Award at the 2004 NJAS.



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youth will be able to learn from their Angus experiences and wants to do what she can to support these kinds of opportunities.

"In the future I would like for myself or my family to help sponsor an award, especially for a speaking contest," McFarland says. "I think public speaking is something that many youth are not well-versed in, and it's a skill that everyone needs."

McFarland says she is honored to win this award, and points out there are many deserving youth.

Sharing the title

As another top contestant deserving of the Crystal Award, Rayl attributes his success to his inquisitive mind.

"I am just curious," he admits. "If I don't know something, then I will ask about it. It just so happened that I asked about EPDs (expected progeny differences) before, and that's what I wrote about."

Rayl participated in many contests, from creative writing to team sales. "I always liked answering questions on tests. So, the trivia and quiz bowl is a lot of fun."

The team competitions and making new friends are Rayl's favorite aspects of the NJAS.

"I've had a lot of help getting the Crystal Award because three of the contests that I placed in I was on teams, so I didn't do it by myself," Rayl points out.

Two of his friends and teammates are the Gardiner twins, Cole and Ransom, from Ashland, Kan. They were both on Rayl's quiz bowl and salesmanship teams.

Cole says Rayl is a hard worker. "During quiz bowl he knew a lot of the answers, and he didn't have that long to practice for salesmanship because he had to go to church camp," Cole adds.

Ransom says they all work together and have fun, even when they have to practice. "We get together and we do little rounds where we go around and ask each other questions," he says.

From participating on his basketball team to completing schoolwork, Rayl says everyday life helps prepare him for the rigors of competing at the NJAS.

"In school we always write stories, and the fastest person to get done has more time to do other things," Rayl says. "So the more quickly you can get it written and then study it, the better off you are."

While he's just completed his last year in

the junior division, for ages 9 to 13, he's already a seasoned competitor, which he says helps him deal with nervousness before he competes.

"I just keep going over it and keeping it on the top of my mind," he says of whichever contest he is facing next.

As a returning competitor at the NJAS for several years, he's also identified areas in which he can improve. His favorite contest is extemporaneous speaking, in which he won first in the junior division. He also competed in prepared speaking, an area where he wishes to improve.

"I think I gave my prepared speech well; it's just my topic selection has been horrible. I am not very good at picking a topic, I guess," he says. "You can talk about anything you want, and so far I've picked topics that haven't been very scientific and without many facts."

Rayl does enjoy learning facts about Angus and the beef industry, so he is looking forward to testing his knowledge once again at next year's competitions.

