

East Trails West

A big voice is heard from a small state and its neighbors at the 2005 National Junior Angus Show in Denver, Colo.

Story & photos by Jen Biser

When thinking of the Northeast and the states on the Eastern shore, an image of big cities with lots of people, cars and concrete often appears. Much of what gets noticed from passersby is the local tourist attractions and sites of national interest such as the Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Ocean and historic national parks.

While these attractions are exciting, it should not be overlooked that many Eastern states are still alive within the cattle industry. One state in the East, covering 12,407 square miles, almost 22 times smaller than the state of Texas, still speaks loudly for the cattle industry. From family farms, to backyard hobbyists, to active juniors in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), members of the Maryland Junior Angus Association (MJAA) trailed west with juniors from some of their neighboring states to Denver for the 2005 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

These young men and women brought with them the hopes and dreams that hundreds of other juniors carried as they all made the same trip to participate in the largest registered single-breed cattle show in the world.

Raising the big bucks

There is more to participating in the NJAS than just sending in the paperwork and marking the date on a calendar. The amount of planning and support, from the members themselves and from outside the association, becomes most important to many within the Angus family, and no less to East Coast Angus producers.

Twenty-three MJAA members with 32 head of Angus cattle traveled 1,870 miles west to Denver to represent their state at this year's NJAS. Realizing the financial responsibility that would be required to make the trip, the Maryland juniors, with the support of their parents, advisors and local cattlemen, raised more than \$2,500 since last fall to help fund the trip.

"The money from the fund-raisers allowed the kids to haul their animals for free," says Donna Full, Mount Airy, Md., an MJAA parent. "The only thing they had to

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► Twenty-three Maryland juniors traveled a total of 1,870 miles, bringing 32 head to the 2005 NJAS in Denver, Colo.



► Heather Willis, from Union Bridge, Md., works the hair on her heifer Monday morning of the show.



► Jimmy Full, Mount Airy, Md., was the official flag carrier for the opening ceremonies Monday evening.



► Kati Hereford (left), Hamilton, Va., and Chelsea Wieben, Waterford, Va., get ready for the opening ceremonies Monday evening. The girls traveled to the show with the Maryland contingent.



► Mark Butler, Jefferson, Md., waits for opening ceremonies to begin Monday evening.



► Thomas Wolfrey (left), White Post, Va., and Bobby Velisek, Gaithersburg, Md., say they enjoy the NJAS because of the competition and being able to compete at their best.

cover were their entries and getting themselves to the show.”

The avenues that the Maryland juniors utilized included a gun raffle and a semen sale. The semen sale at the Maryland Angus Breeder’s Sale was backed by 15 sponsors who donated 135 straws from some of the top sires in the Angus breed. Among those sponsors were: Bob Cook, Loomis, Wash.; John Carrel, Columbus, Mont.; Mark Squires and Express Angus Ranches, Yukon, Okla.; Alan Miller, Le Roy, Ill.; Steve Patton, Freeman, S.D.; Jim Horsley, Galva, Ill.; Full Day Ent., Mount Airy, Md.; Will Iager, Fulton, Md.; Myron Kennedy, Brookeville, Md.; Paul Hill, Bidwell, Ohio; Whitestone Farm, Aldie, Va.; Roseda Farm, Monkton, Md.; Select Sires Inc., Plain City, Ohio; and Accelerated Genetics, Baraboo, Wis.

MJAA Treasurer Brittany Full from Mount Airy, Md., says she would like to thank everyone who helped put on a successful gun raffle and the breeders who donated or purchased semen from the juniors at Maryland’s spring sale.

“The Maryland Angus Association and the Maryland Junior Angus work as a team,” says Pam Velisek, Gaithersburg, Md., a parent. “The breeders in Maryland are so good to their kids. For the semen sale fundraiser, they waited to buy their semen for the spring so they could support the juniors and buy from them.”

A meaningful opportunity

To many Angus juniors, the chance to travel to the NJAS opens doors and eyes. The NJAS allows youth the opportunity to interact with other juniors from varying levels of experience and knowledge of the cattle industry.

However, it is the ability to build a valuable network among other juniors while gaining personal experience that a lot of members find important.

“I like the diversity of people from different regions who come together with the common interest of Angus cattle,” says Heather Willis, Union Bridge, Md. Heather has been a member of the NJAA for four years, and she and her sister Jessica have been to the NJAS twice — once in Kansas City, Mo., and the other in Denver.

Jessica says, “The NJAS is fun because it offers the opportunity to interact with kids from other states and see cattle from across the country.”

The number of opportunities that are connected through involvement within the NJAA are endless; however, it is the individual who has to take the chance and try new things.

“The NJAA opens up a world of opportunities to kids who reach for them,” says Chelsea Wieben of Waterford, Va. Chelsea, who often shows with Maryland juniors, continues to explain that younger members shouldn’t be intimidated to try new things no matter where they are from. “There have been just as many winners from the East Coast as there are [from] the West,” she says.

This year, Chelsea’s words could not have rung more true. The East Coast brought home both the champion and reserve grand champion steers; the champion and reserve grand champion owned females; and four of the top five showmen awards from the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest, including the champion showman.

“The Western states have a definite advantage in quantity,” Wieben says. “But, it only takes one to win.”

Jacob Wolfrey, a Maryland junior who now lives in White Post, Va., agrees. “It doesn’t matter where you’re from — good cattle will always be good and do well.”

Even with so much up for grabs, these junior members still keep their eyes on the reality of it all. Christina Ritter of Laytonsville, Md., says winning isn’t what keeps her coming back to the showing. “It’s the little things that I have learned, like responsibility and devotion to something I started,” she says. “Showing cattle allows me to make a mistake and then fix it.”

Thomas Wolfrey, Jacob’s younger brother, adds, “It’s not about winning, but trying your best and enjoying the



► Right: Emily Velisek of Gaithersburg, Md., watches the show to support the other juniors. She says what she enjoys the most about the NJAA is traveling and being able to experience life on the farm.



competition while giving it all you've got."

The juniors say they enjoy traveling to different states and connecting with many people from across the country.

"My favorite part about the NJAS is meeting people from all over," says Candace Howard of Keymar, Md. "I think it is a privilege to be able to show and travel. The Maryland Junior Angus Association has been important in helping me to follow my own interests."

Emily Velisek of Gaithersburg, Md., says she enjoys being able to take advantage of opportunities not available to all youth. She says she likes being able to experience life on a farm.

The Eastern juniors have a positive attitude toward their experience showing Angus cattle and being involved in the NJAA. "Showing is the same as playing sports because you have to work as a team with your animal," Emily says.

"It's a personal high for me," says Mark Butler of Jefferson, Md. "Showing cattle is something that I want for myself and is something I love to do."

Support network

These juniors know what it means to support each other and those around them. Chelsea knows firsthand about the support network the NJAA has to offer. As one member of 15 who attended the NJAS from her home state of Virginia, Chelsea was offered a spot on the trailer that was hauling the cattle from Maryland.

"I have always shown with the juniors from Maryland as well as others from the East Coast," Wieben says. "It has meant a lot to have other states so close by to help you out. We would have had to drive ourselves if Maryland had said they didn't have room."

Kati Hereford, from Hamilton, Va., sent her heifer with the Maryland juniors. Jennifer Hower, Bethlehem, Pa., and Caitlin and Ryan Fairbairn, Coatesville, Pa., added six additional head to complete the full 25-head load.

"The trailer was full," says Chester Kerns, Rocky Ridge, Md., one of the parents, as well as the owner and operator of the semi that

made the trek west. "They filled the top deck with tack and the bottom was full with the cattle. We also had two breeders haul themselves and a separate tack trailer."

Chelsea says, "I have always felt that I was at an advantage being smaller and more close-knit as a group. Because the states are so much closer together, you have more interaction with each other and it's fun."

Without the help from those who spent hours, time and money on planning and executing the NJAS trip, the juniors from the East know it might not have been possible to fully realize their expectations this year.

Brittany says, "I thank my parents and the Maryland advisors, Frank and Julie Feeser, for always being there to support me and the rest of the juniors."

Participating by mail

For some Eastern juniors, participating in the 2005 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) was realized through the mail. Katrina Frey, Quarryville, Pa., and her parents, Fritz and Nancy, decided that Denver was just too far and chose not to attend. Katrina did not miss out, however. She still had the opportunity to send in three photographs she had taken and compete in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA)/*Angus Journal* Photography Contest.

"It was pretty cool that you can still compete in the NJAS even without having to travel all of the miles," Katrina says. "I am looking forward to being able to attend the NJAS next year."

Contests juniors can compete in without attending the show include the photo contest, creative writing, poster contest and graphic design.



▶ Brittany Full, Mount Airy, Md., topped 53 entries to win grand champion steer Wednesday.



▶ Jennifer Hower, Bethlehem, Pa., shows her steer, which rode on the trailer with the Maryland juniors to Denver.



▶ The Maryland juniors needed a separate trailer to haul their feed and tack.