

Amazing

Former Montana Angus juniors team up to give back to other Angus youth.

by Kindra Gordon



► Montana Angus youth gathered in the ring to pay tribute to the nation while Mandy Jacobs sang "The Star Spangled Banner."



► Above: Juniors' parents were responsible for clerking the auction.

► Right: Bill Cook (seated on right) served as auctioneer of the heifer donated to benefit the 2005 NJAS and MJAA members. Cook says it's important to support youth on the national level.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEFF FLESCH

► Jamie Pepper says being involved in the Angus breed helped make her and the other donors strong leaders for the ag industry.



► Mountain Meadow Cattle Co., Walden, Colo., was a \$1,000 donor and won the heifer. The operation is known for its support of Angus youth.

Ask former junior Angus members about their experiences in junior Angus associations on the state or national level and you are bound to discover fond memories, gratitude for the friendships and leadership skills gained, and a hope that other youth have those same opportunities.

For Tom Patterson, Bill Cook, Jamie Pepper, Jeff Flesch and Bob Stevenson — all former presidents of the Montana Junior Angus Association (MJAA) — the positive influence of their own Angus experiences prompted them to find a way to give back to other Angus juniors. These five individuals did so by pooling their talents for a special MJAA fund-raiser at the 2004 Northern International Livestock Exposition (NILE) in Billings, Mont., in October, with proceeds earmarked to benefit the MJAA and the upcoming 2005 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Denver, Colo.

"Hosting the NJAS is a huge financial undertaking for the host state and for those who participate. Montana is small in numbers but mighty in spirit, and the five of us came to the consensus that we wanted to help contribute by raising funds for as many Angus juniors as possible to be able to participate in next year's event," says Patterson, who served as the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Board chairman in 2001.

"I grew up in the Angus industry and felt it was time to give back so other juniors can have similar opportunities to those that I've had," adds Stevenson, who served as vice chairman of the NJAA Board in 1996.

Flesch echoes those comments, saying, "I've learned so much from the junior Angus program and developed so many good values that I was happy to be able to give back in some way."

These MJAA alumni donated resources for a special heifer package — patterned after the Angus Foundation Heifer Package sale that occurs each January at Denver's National Western Stock Show (NWSS) — and raffled it off by an auction at the NILE Angus Female Sale. Patterson donated the heifer, Cook served as auctioneer, Pepper provided fitting services, Stevenson is offering embryo transfer (ET) services to the new owners of the female, and Flesch put together a photography package from the event. An additional donor was Randy Lathrop of Lathrop Livestock Transportation, Dundee, Ill., who provided free delivery of the heifer to the new owner within the continental United States.

In total, the fund-raising effort brought in \$37,680 for Angus youth. The heifer, a March 2004 daughter of Rock'n' D Ambush 1531 out of a Leachman Right Time dam, brought \$36,630 and was won by Mountain Meadow Cattle Co. of Walden, Colo. A semen auction contributed another \$1,050 to the cause.

Giving back

Each of these former Angus juniors — who all now have careers in agriculture — agree that being part of this fund-raiser was a means of saying thank you for the opportunities they had in MJAA programs, as well as a way to ensure opportunities for the next generation of Angus leadership. The money raised will be used for future MJAA activities, such as defraying some of the expenses for Montana juniors who attend the 2005 NJAS. As a co-sponsor of the event, the MJAA will also contribute a portion of the proceeds from their fund-raiser to activities for the national show.

Fund-Raising

"I think all five of us recognize that our involvement in the Angus breed helped develop us into the people we are today, so it was important to be a part of this fund-raising event for current juniors," says Pepper, who is secretary of the Montana Angus Association and editor of the *Montana Angus News*, as well as a working member of her family's Birdtail Ranch Angus, Simms, Mont., and an employee at Hilt Veterinary Service of Dutton, Mont.

She adds, "We also realized that the National Junior Angus Show is probably never going to get closer to Montana than Denver, so we wanted to help as many of our state's juniors get to be part of that experience by raising this money for it."

"Even if they can't take a heifer, they can still benefit from being in the speech contest or Cook-Off and other events. There's no better foundation for future leaders in our industry than to be involved in Angus events at the national level," says Patterson, who today is employed by MachineryLink in Kansas City, Mo.

"It's neat to be able to help juniors get involved in Angus activities on the national level," adds Cook, who is presently stockyards manager of the Billings Livestock Commission Co., Billings, Mont., and a professional livestock auctioneer.

Stevenson, who oversees the ET and ultrasound work on his family's ranch, says he also hopes some of the MJAA funds will be used for educational programs for Montana Angus youth for years to come.

Lots of support

Of the entire fund-raising effort, John and Pam Patterson, who raise Angus cattle near Columbus, Mont., and are current advisors of the MJAA, say they are extremely proud of the generosity of the five individuals. "These young alumni stepped up and willingly offered their unique talents. Because of their generosity many Montana juniors will be able to experience the 'magic' of the NJAS," John says.

Everyone involved in this unique event is also appreciative of the many people who supported the MJAA heifer fund-raiser.

"We were pleasantly surprised and proud of the support we received for the next generation of Montana Angus breeders. We had monetary support from across Montana and 11 other states," Tom reports.

Flesch, who has his own professional livestock photography business, Big Sky Cattle Services, and works for Genetics West in Longmont, Colo., says the response to the event was overwhelming and rewarding to see. "It was just a great day and neat to be part of such a special event."

The auction was conducted so that bidders bought tickets at \$10 per ticket, with a \$50 minimum bid. For instance, a \$1,000 bid would buy 100 tickets; \$50 would buy five. At the end of the auction, all tickets were put together and a winner was drawn.

"This method allows people to donate at a comfort level they can afford and still participate in the fund-raiser," John says.

Cook says he was impressed that so many people donated, especially in the \$100 to \$500 range, and says, "That's what made it successful — that so many people were willing to give."



► Montana has many youth interested in raising Angus cattle and participating in the opportunities offered within the state and on the national level. Breeders from across Montana and throughout the United States showed their support of these youth by donating to the heifer fund-raiser project.

Pam says she believes the free delivery offered by Lathrop also made it possible for more out-of-state participation. "Because of that we had tremendous support from coast to coast," she says.

Mountain Meadow was among the \$1,000 donors. The operation has a stellar history of helping youth programs, including regularly supporting 4-H and other youth activities in its local Colorado community, as well as teaming with Sterling Hunter of Bath, Mich., to be the top bidder on the Angus Foundation Heifer Package at the NWSS last January. (Sterling Hunter was also a major contributor to the MJAA heifer fund-raiser.)

John Todd, Mountain Meadow general manager, says it was a thrill to get the heifer, but it was even more rewarding to have the opportunity to support youth. "We just feel it is so important to support future producers and leaders in agriculture. It's an opportunity to help make a difference in these young people's lives."

John and Pam say it was truly rewarding to see so many supporters for junior Angus programs. John says, "We should never underestimate the generosity of the people in this breed and their belief in youth activities."

Opportunities for others

Given the success of the event, many of those involved with Montana's unique fund-raiser hope it will inspire other junior Angus alumni to find opportunities to give back to their state Angus programs.

"I believe there is real potential for a junior Angus alumni association that could help advance the Angus Foundation," John says. "Many former juniors may not stay in the day-to-day cattle business, but they have fond memories of their time with Angus growing up and the skills they developed through those activities. They want to give back."

Angus regional manager Andy Rest agrees that this is a fund-raising format that could fit several state associations. "I'm sure there are a lot of past juniors willing to donate their time and talents, as well as those willing to contribute to support Angus activities. In this case, the heifer was almost secondary; it was gratifying to see that people really responded to the cause of supporting Angus youth."

