



► The 2005 retiring Board members include (back row, from left) Tyler Grissom, Prague, Okla.; Jarrett Martin, Lavaca, Ark.; Kyle Conley, Clarksdale, Mo.; (front row, from left) Jeana Sankey, Council Grove, Kan.; Jennifer Ourso, Donaldsonville, La.; and Joanna Olson, Hereford, Texas.

retiring board members set out to become chiefs in the world, they realize what the Board provided them — on both professional and personal levels.

For some, it was gaining experience in working as a team, learning how to deal with different personalities and ideas, and learning more about themselves. For others, it was the challenge of knowing when to be the leader and when to follow. However, NJAA Board members learn these skills early when serving their two-year terms.

Olson says she credits the Board for many skills she has gained during her term. It is the Board, she says, that has helped her recognize her strengths and weaknesses, which will benefit her in her future career.

“Being an officer this past year has taught me how to be a chief and an Indian at the same time,” Olson says. “This is a skill that is not easy to come by, but one that will be beneficial for the rest of my life.”

Chairman Ourso says her biggest challenge was making sure everyone stayed motivated and followed through on his or her ideas. Although she was the leader of the Board, she realized that part of her duty was to let other Board members lead her, too.

“It is easy to have ideas and set goals, but it is difficult to follow through,” Ourso says. “It’s a challenge that we all deal with. I learned how to follow through by being a part of this team.”

For this group of six, Ourso says it was through the NJAA program that they became friends early in life. This allowed each of them to be more familiar with the others’ strengths and weaknesses, which Ourso felt enabled them to be a strong Board.

Shelia Stannard, NJAA Board advisor and

Chiefs or Indians?

Retiring NJAA Board members recognize their roles.

Story & photos by *Shelby Axtell*

“Too many chiefs and not enough Indians” is a familiar phrase to anyone who has ever been in a leadership position, held an office or worked on a committee. Each year, the 12 National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members who serve on the NJAA Board of Directors learn how to work successfully with others. Even though they are the chiefs of the NJAA, they still have to play the role of Indians.

Jennifer Ourso, Donaldsonville, La., chairman; Jeana Sankey, Council Grove, Kan., vice chairman; Tyler Grissom, Prague, Okla., leadership director; Jarrett Martin, Lavaca, Ark., membership director; Joanna Olson, Hereford, Texas, communications director; and Kyle Conley, Clarksdale, Mo., Foundation director, retired their green jackets at the 2005 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Denver, Colo. As these six

► Foundation director Kyle Conley takes a break from a round of golf. Board members are given the opportunity to participate in various events where they meet new breeders, industry leaders and friends.



► Jennifer Ourso (left) and Jeana Sankey enjoy some watermelon together. Even though the Board works hard, there is still time for good food and friends.



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American Angus Association director of activity communications and event coordinator, says she was privileged to work with such an enjoyable group of youth.

“These officers really came together as a team,” Stannard says. “They were six individuals with six different perspectives, but they complemented each other very well. This group had a history together through the NJAA programs, and I think it enabled them to combine their various strengths and weaknesses to enhance the programs for other junior members.”

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► Communications director Joanna Olson poses for a quick photo while assisting with check-in at the 2005 NJAS. Board members stay busy the entire week of the NJAS with various responsibilities.

► **Below:** Jennifer Ourso (left) and Tyler Grissom enjoy posing for the camera and showing off some of their dance moves. Board members form close friendships with each other during their years on the Board.



► Jarrett Martin (right) helps James Fisher of the American Angus Association with the advisors' meeting at the 2005 NJAS.



► Joanna Olson (left) visits with a fellow junior member during the 2004 Youth Beef Industry Congress (YBIC). Congress attendees get to interact with Board members and learn more about the Angus industry.



► Membership director Jarrett Martin gives junior members instructions before the quiz bowl contest during the 2005 NJAS in Denver, Colo. Board members' duties include helping with various contests during the NJAS.



► Joanna Olson (left) and Kyle Conley work the announcer's stand during the 2005 NJAS.

Serving the people

Working with the other Board members and juniors has been one of Conley's highlights. The experience has also sparked his interest in serving on future boards.

"As a team I have really enjoyed working with such creative, fun and intelligent people that I know I will continue to work with in the future," Conley says. "Being a Board member has also made me realize how important directors are. They are the voice of the people, and in our case that is more than

10,000 junior Angus members, which is an important job to me."

Being the voice for so many can be quite a task, but it can also be quite rewarding. Being this voice was one of Martin's perks.

"Talking to our junior members and finding out what was important to them was one of my favorite duties," Martin says. "I enjoyed being able to take action for the benefit of the association and its members."

Making decisions for junior members and setting those decisions into action requires meetings and time, which has helped direct Grissom's future path. It was the meetings that showed him how much he enjoyed working in teams and feeding off others' ideas.

"The Board has given me invaluable experience on how to work as a team in a business environment," Grissom says. "It has also showed me how much I enjoy the long hours in the boardroom, pounding out results and listening to others' ideas and thoughts."

It's more than just business

Sankey says the Board has provided her with much more than just real-world skills; it has given her great friends.

"As an officer team, it has taught me how to work with others who have different personalities," Sankey says. "But, most importantly, it has given me five best friends and allowed me to meet a tremendous amount of great people who I know I will be in contact with for the rest of my life."

The five other Board members agree with Sankey. The Board provided them with more than just professional skills, it has given them friends from coast to coast.

"My favorite part of being on this Board was knowing that I was making and developing relationships that would last," Orso says. "We had a great time, and we enjoyed ourselves. I have so many memories and have had so many laughs, which I will keep with me always."

Future plans for these six include finishing school, starting careers and pursuing additional interests, such as medical school. Orso will graduate in May 2006 from Louisiana State University with a bachelor's degree in biological sciences and a minor in Spanish. She hopes to pursue medical school.

Sankey will be graduating in December 2006 from Oklahoma State University (OSU) with a bachelor's in agricultural



► Jeana Sankey (left) and Kyle Conley share a quick hug before going home after the 2004 Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference. Working together for two years, Board members form lasting friendships.



► Tyler Grissom (left) and Shelia Stannard, Board advisor, pose for a quick picture together. Board members make close ties with their advisors and with many other industry leaders from coast to coast.

communications. She wants to pursue a career in livestock advertising or as a junior activities director.

Grissom will graduate in May 2006 with a degree in marketing from OSU and is interested in pursuing graduate school.

Martin is pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Arkansas and plans to continue his interest in Angus.

Olson will graduate in May 2006 from Texas A&M University with a degree in animal science and a minor in business. Her future plans are to return to the Texas Panhandle and pursue a career in the beef industry.

Conley plans to continue to be active in his family's registered Angus herd after graduating from OSU.

Even though the paths of these six retiring Board members vary, their experiences and the memories of their time on the NJAA Board will remain with them for the rest of their lives. As they stepped down from their time on the NJAA Board, they credit their strong NJAA backgrounds to much of their success and know that this experience will continue to benefit them for years. It is Board members like them and their commitment to each other that keep the NJAA program strong and growing.



▶ Apparently Board members start thinking alike. Jeana Sankey (left) and Jennifer Ourso show off their matching pink shoes and green shirts.

Advice for future NJAA Board members:

“Stay as motivated as possible and always remember why you ran for the Board and why you got elected. Make every effort to get along with your fellow Board members and never stop communicating. If you stay motivated, communicate and become real friends, then you will want to work hard, and success will be inevitable.”

— Jennifer Ourso

“Enjoy it! Two years seems like a long time when you first get elected; however, it will go by so fast.”

— Jeana Sankey

“Do not take your moments on the Board for granted. You are provided the opportunity to experience many new things — take the time to savor those moments and learn from them.”

— Joanna Olson

“No matter what, don't stop having fun.”

— Tyler Grissom

“Do not be afraid to speak up for what is right. If something needs to be changed, then change it.”

— Kyle Conley

“Always do what is right for the Association. You are not here for yourself, but for our junior members. Never lose track of what is important in life.”

— Jarrett Martin



▶ Retiring and past NJAA Board members (from left) Joanna Olson, Jamie King, Kyle Conley, Tyler Grissom and Jarrett Martin wave to the crowd at the 2004 NJAS opening ceremonies in Kansas City, Mo.