



Curtis Bryant



Casey Jentz



Alicia Kramer



Heath McPherson



Renee Thelen



Jake Tiedeman

End of an Era

Six NJAA members retire from the Board of Directors.

Story & photos by Abby White

Look for the group of young adults in green jackets at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and you'll often find them talking, laughing and having a good time. Look closer and you'll notice they're also discussing future events, planning work schedules and developing programs.

The NJAS was bittersweet for the six National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Board members who retired in 2006 after serving two years.

What has been the most important to them is not the countless hours they spent discussing, planning and developing, it's the time they spent together.

"What I'll miss most is the other Board members," Casey Jentz, vice chairman from Fennimore, Wis., said. "Not being able to see each other will be hard. It's just a whole lot of fun any time we get together."

And they do spend a lot of time working on NJAA activities. Jake Tiedeman, chairman from North Platte, Neb., said on average, Board members spend one to three days a week working on a junior Board activity. But, they always make the

most out of their time together, and all say they will miss it.

"I'm going to miss having the opportunity to travel around and work with other juniors around the country," said Renee Thelen, leadership director from Saline, Mich. "It makes me feel kind of old. It's a nice way to cap off my junior career."

Renee will graduate from Michigan State University in December and will look for a job in promotions or marketing in the beef industry. Her degrees will be in ag business and animal science.

"It's kind of bittersweet that I'm moving on to the next part of my life after being on the Board, which I loved so much," Renee said.

Jake echoed words similar to Renee's and said he's had a lot of great memories.

"It's a bittersweet experience because of the thrills and experiences that I've had here," Jake said. "It's hard to leave, but I know



► Above: Renee Thelen, leadership director, hugs her mom during the NJAS awards ceremony. Retiring Board members and their parents were honored for serving on the NJAA Board of Directors at the close of the ceremony.



► Casey Jentz, vice chairman, helps move a steer during the NJAS. Working the ring is one of the many responsibilities of being an NJAA Board member.



► **Left:** Heath McPherson, membership director, entertains the NJAA voting delegates by singing “I’m a Little Teapot” while they wait for the votes to be counted. Heath will graduate in December and plans to continue his Angus involvement in livestock marketing.

► **Right:** Curtis Bryant, NJAA Foundation director from Monkton, Md., retired from the Board after serving a two-year term.

► **Below:** Tracee Veenstra, director, and Jake Tiedeman, chairman, got into an ice cream fight during the NJAS ice cream social.



Iowa State University and then plans to continue his involvement in livestock marketing.

“[The Board] has built my character a bit and put me out in situations that have tested my abilities,” Heath said. “It’s made me a more effective leader.”

The retirees were also quick to point out that while this may be their last NJAS as junior Board members, it’s definitely not their last NJAS.

“I will attend as many junior nationals as I possibly can,” Casey said. “This is just my last one serving on the Board.

“It’s been a great experience, and you can never pass that up,” he continued.

“I didn’t really know a whole lot of people before I got on the Board, and that’s one of the most valuable things — the relationships.”

Casey graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, with a degree in animal science and will start looking for a job after he is finished serving his term on the NJAA Board of Directors.

Alicia Kramer, communication director from Farina, Ill., has already started her real-world job. She started working for First Farm Credit Services after graduating from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. She is a loan officer vice president trainee and will start working with Livingston and Kankakee counties in Illinois in December.

what I’ve done will prepare me for my next step as well. It’s been a great experience and will lead to more open doors.”

Jake plans to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) in this month and will then apply to begin law school in a year. In the meantime, he will help his parents manage their cattle operation.

Jake said people have been an important part of his junior Board experience.

“I have friends in every state — people that I can call at 2:00 in the afternoon or midnight with whatever problem I have,” Jake said. He pointed to the audience watching the owned heifer show and said, “I have friends in every section of that stadium right there, mostly due to the fact that I was on the Board.”

Curtis Bryant, Foundation director from Monkton, Md., said he’s also going to miss being on the junior Board.

“It’s been a big part of my life,” he said. “It meant a lot to me when I got on. I never suspected it’d be as great as it has been. I had high expectations, and it went well over that.

“It’s really nice to be a part of the NJAS, meeting the junior Board members I have,” Curtis continued. “And all the connections are really special, not only with the juniors, but with everyone I’ve worked with.”

Curtis said being on the Board has helped him conquer his shyness and to be more open about everything he does.

“I’ve formed lifelong relationships. I would have never gotten to know these guys like I have if it wasn’t for the junior Board,” he added.

Curtis graduated from Oklahoma State University and is currently working for Lovell Cattle Co. in Maryland.

Not only will the retiring directors miss the people, they will also miss the opportunities.

“It’s been a real opportunity for me,” Heath McPherson, membership director from Snow Camp, N.C., said. “I’ve met a lot of people that I wouldn’t have met otherwise.

“What I’ll miss the most is going to the major bull shows,” he continued. “It’s pretty much the highlight — watching the shows from the best seat in the house.”

Heath will graduate in December from

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“I truly enjoyed the Board more than any other leadership activity I’ve ever been involved with,” Alicia said. “I’ve been involved in 4-H and FFA and collegiate activities, and

this is truly the best that there is. I’ve met more people and really refined the ability to talk with anyone, handle situations and be knowledgeable in any subject possible.”



Alicia said her best memories are seeing how happy other junior members are and the joy they get out of contests.

“I’ll miss being with my fellow Board members and advisors,” she said. “Our advisors help us out a lot, and they’re great mentors and great people.”

Casey said that being a member of the Board is the best thing he’s done up to this point in his life. “Hopefully there will be bigger and better things someday, but it’s pretty hard to go out and top being a member of the National Junior Angus Board — it’s kind of a one-time opportunity.”

The Board members will all move on to do new things in life, but they will always have their memories from being on the NJAA Board of Directors together.

“Each Board is kind of a chapter in their book,” Jake said. “If my name’s on something, I want myself and those that I’m involved with to make sure that history is written in a way that we can all be proud of. We worked hard. We worked well together, and we had fun when it was all said and done.”

