



► **Above:** Micah and Norah Nunn work together to get cattle ready for the showing.

► **Below:** The Nunn kids are anxiously waiting their turn in the showing.



Starting Them Young

Families encourage Angus involvement from the get-go for their young future breeders.

Story & photos by Bridget Beran, editorial intern

Big cattle, heavy equipment and hard work may not seem like the best environment for children, but for farm kids, it's more than just an experience. It's a way of life. Raising children to become strong leaders in the agriculture industry is no small feat. Parents have to consider safety and work ethic, and encourage their children to be involved without burning them out on their love of agriculture.

For the Tweedy family of Imboden, Ark., there was no better place than a farm for their nine children to grow up. Cheri Tweedy says that while her older children started out in

the Limousin breed, for the youngest four (January, 17; Jake, 14; Jeb, 13; and Jady, 11), Angus was the right choice.

With crops being a big part of the family operation, the Tweedy children have been on a tractor with Cheri since birth and are well-trained in safety procedures, as well as careful cattle handling.

"They know what they can and can't handle. We keep a close eye on them. They're still kids, so you can't just turn them loose," Cheri explains, "but they're very responsible kids. I think you raise more responsible adults if you expect them to be hard workers

at a young age. You have to instill morals and work ethic from the very beginning.”

Developing the know how

Work ethic is the name of the game in the Theis household. For Jerry and Tonya Theis, Leavenworth, Kan., it was paramount that their children understand the value of putting in the work, whether with cattle or in contests.

“The kids really do it all. Of course, any kid at 9 years old is going to need a lot of help from Mom and Dad. They need to learn what needs to be done and how to do it as they get older,” Jerry explains. The youngest member of the Theis family, Kelsey, is 11 now and already moving away from needing Mom and Dad’s help, with the help of her older siblings, Megan Green and Cody Theis, that is.

“She’s got the advantage of having an older sister and brother who went through the NJAA (National Junior Angus Association) as well. They work together, and I think that’s really important. It’s amazing when it’s crunch time how much kids who were brought up the right way and know how to work can get done,” Jerry says.

Family support is a key factor for the Nunn family, as well. Josh and Sarah Nunn, Upton, Ky., are raising their four children — Lincoln and Emily, 12; Micah, 5; and Norah, 3 — to work together and support each other.

“When we first moved back, Josh decided we were going to have some show heifers, and it got [addictive],” Sarah says. “Lincoln isn’t with us all the time, but Emily is always taking care of his calves and making sure they’re ready, as well. We’ve really grown the ranch for them.”

Time together

Emily says that spending time with her family is the best part of raising cattle, evidenced by her lessons with Micah and Norah in the barn as they practice correctly setting up a calf and scratching her with a showstick almost twice their height.

The Nunns have attended two National Junior Angus Shows (NJAS), and the children are homeschooled, which helps them to be more hands-on with the cattle.

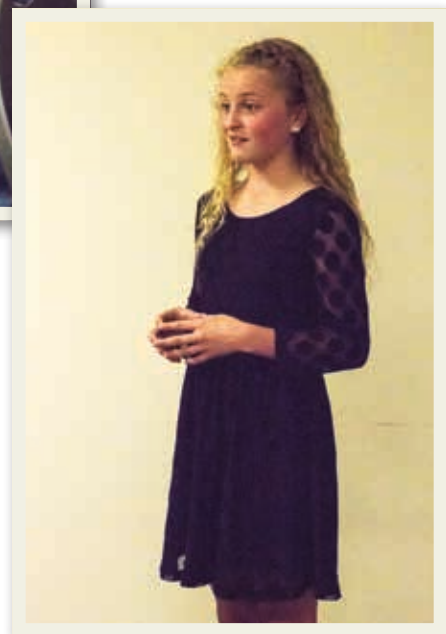
“There’s not a lot of other ways you can have this much valuable time with your family,” Sarah says. “There are never enough hours in the day, but it’s important to remember that there’s always tomorrow. There have been so many days when we tried to get it all done, but there will always be another day.”

For Kelsey, those extra hours spent outside of the barn have gone to preparing her for contests at the NJAS. An active competitor in prepared speech and quiz bowl, Jerry says her



► **Left:** Jerry Theis watches as Kelsey gives her speech at the NJAS.

► **Below:** Kelsey Theis delivers her prepared speech about animal byproducts. “Public speaking has helped me a lot. Teachers are impressed with how much more comfortable I am speaking in front of people than most kids my age,” Kelsey says.



contest experiences have been invaluable.

“All the contests are as meaningful as the actual show. The amount of knowledge that she’s gained from those experiences has helped to prepare her for so much later in life,” Jerry says.

However, high on the favorites list at the NJAS is the friendships that are made.

“I really enjoy the people you get the opportunity to meet. Without nationals I wouldn’t know people from different states and other parts of the country,” Kelsey says.

Nationwide friendships were also a drawing point for the Tweedy family. Cheri calls the NJAS their family vacation and says it’s an event that the children look forward to each year.

“They get to meet a lot of new people and see new parts of the country they might have never had the opportunity to see if not for the NJAA,” Cheri says. “It’s a great opportunity for all kids to be involved in. The people you meet are tremendous.”

It may be intimidating for some parents to trust their kids to work long hours, build relationships with other juniors from across the country and handle large animals. However, for Angus families, kids and cows are a perfect combination.



Editor’s Note: Bridget Beran was the summer 2016 publications intern for Angus Media.



► Butch and Norah Nunn discuss calves after feeding in the evening.