



More than a Cattle Show

What happens at the NJAS impacts the industry far beyond the showing.

Story & photos by **Nicole Lane**, editorial intern

To many, the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) is simply another junior activity. It's meant for Angus youth and their families, and it is centered around the showing. While that may be true, the NJAS also has lasting effects on the cattle industry that trace all the way back to the commercial and seedstock producer.

Christy and Phil Page of Jefferson, Ga., operate an Angus-based commercial herd of about 125 head in conjunction with Phil's parents. Christy grew up showing Angus cattle while Phil showed Limousin. Both active in junior organizations, Christy served as Miss American Angus and as the first-ever events and activities intern at the American Angus Association. Phil was chairman of the national junior Limousin board. Growing up, the now married couple showed against each other at several local and regional shows. However, Christy's favorite show was the NJAS, and during her junior career, she missed only one.

As youth, raising cattle was mainly a

hobby, but lessons learned in the showing have translated into knowledge of the cattle industry that has helped them build their commercial herd. Starting from a Limousin base of Phil's family herd, they have transitioned to Angus, something about which Christy didn't have any reservations. She says it was their experience showing cattle that introduced a passion for raising quality beef and gave them the desire to continue long beyond their years in the ring.

"We both grew up in it, loved it and had the passion to want to continue it with the cattle and the family," she says.

Where it all begins

Fast-forward to Tulsa, Okla., and the 2015 NJAS. Christy is back, but this time with her 11-year-old daughter, Savannah. This is Savannah's first NJAS, and just like her mom did many years before her, Savannah led an Angus heifer into the national showing for the very first time.

Christy says she couldn't imagine a better

way to raise her daughter than by helping her learn the lessons of responsibility, hard work, and the ins and outs of the cattle industry through the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). She says it was her involvement in the organization that led her to want to continue to be involved in agriculture through her career in agriculture communications.

Savannah has been an avid swine showman, but just recently began to show cattle. Both she and her mom say that it was the trip to NJAS this year that really ignited a desire to exhibit cattle more.

"Being out here has sparked her interest in Angus, and I'm sure we'll be back for many more national junior shows," says Christy.

Already making plans for Nebraska, Savannah says she wants to get involved outside the showing, too. She hopes to compete in the livestock judging contest, the All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Cook-Off and public speaking. Although her daughter is just getting started, Christy

understands that these experiences are considerably more than just contests.

“These kids are learning so much,” she explains. “They are learning about the Angus program and all these contests teach them why Angus and *Certified Angus Beef* are so important. I think it helps them become better advocates for the Angus industry and Angus producers moving forward.”

The future of the industry

A commercial producer and executive secretary for the Georgia Angus Association, Christy understands how the lessons learned at NJAS helped shape her and her husband’s involvement in the Angus business.

“It’s given us knowledge of the cattle industry,” says Christy. “Everything you learn along the way helps you build a better future.”

Although the showring can seem like a distant place from the ranch, Christy emphasizes the relevance of events like NJAS to all types of producers across the breed.

“The kids here, this is the future of the industry whether it’s purebred- or commercial-based,” she says. “A lot of these kids are going to go on to have cattle and are going to be related to the commercial industry whether they have commercial cattle or commercial customers.”

It doesn’t matter if they are in the ring or competing in a contest, the juniors at NJAS are working to be the leaders of the future for the Business Breed. Christy shares that she has witnessed members who are highly competitive both inside and outside the showring in events like public speaking, job interview, photography and graphic design. To her, the future looks bright.

David Gazda, American Angus Association regional manager, also says there’s more to NJAS than meets the eye. He admits everyone looks at the showring differently, but whether a producer’s production goals are geared toward the ring or not, the NJAS is a great event for all involved in the breed.

“It’s the fact that Angus are being promoted in a positive light,” says Gazda. “Whether you are a commercial producer or whether you are tied to the showring, any time we can have some positive promotional material on Angus youth and the breed, it’s a positive thing for the industry and the membership.”

He emphasizes that the juniors at NJAS will be the ones who will influence the consumer in the future and that they represent the next group of Angus breeders.

“I think a lot of people tie the junior show and the NJAA strictly to the showring,” he says. “But there are so many more



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTY PAGE

► Savannah Page enters the showring for the first time. The knowledge gained here will serve her well at home on the ranch and far into the future.

opportunities to become involved. It’s a great way for them to learn life skills, communications skills and how to represent the breed and cattle industry in the future.”

Tradition passed on

He says one of the highlights for him each year is the near quarter of a million dollars in scholarships awarded by the Angus Foundation, American Angus Auxiliary and American Angus Association.

“To me, that speaks volumes of the good of the breed and the good of the organization,” says Gazda.

He has personally been affected as his daughters were recipients of scholarships that helped them pay for school. He says the cattle business really isn’t about the cattle, it’s about the people, and these juniors and their families are some of the best.

“You’ve got to look at it from the standpoint of the young people here and what they represent,” says Gazda. “Whether you show cattle or not, I think it’s the fact that these young people represent the breed and the industry so well.”

Savannah says her goal is to just keep

showing cattle and getting better as the years go on.

Of course, it makes sense for her to show Angus, as that’s what her family raises. Her show cattle will add value to the commercial herd and will fit easily back into their program.

However, to the Page family, it’s more than just showing cattle, it’s passing a tradition that will teach their daughter important lessons and strong values that can only come from loving and raising Angus cattle.

Christy says, “She’s still young and she’s got many years ahead of her to be in the Angus business.”

A few Angus show heifers are now grazing the pastures at the home ranch in Georgia while a little girl is excited about what the future holds for her foundation females and the bred-and-owned offspring they may soon be able to provide. The 2015 NJAS may have been Savannah’s first time in the national Angus showring, but it certainly won’t be her last.

