

Something

NJAA experiences run the gamut.

by Barb Baylor Anderson, field editor



LEAD



Showmanship contest



Mentoring program

From coloring to career development, National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members find programs and activities are available for them to get involved and explore diverse interests.

“There is something for all ages in the NJAA. The variety of activities meets the needs of juniors with all interests and talents,” confirms Michelle Keyes, a Springfield, Neb., junior who participated in the 2014 Raising the Bar Officer/Advisor Leadership Conference hosted in Lubbock, Texas. “This association offers outstanding ways to meet other Angus enthusiasts from across the nation. For me, I know those will turn into valuable connections later in life.”

Different options nurture junior members and showcase NJAA as a top youth organization, says Jaclyn Upperman, American Angus Association director of events and education.

“All of our programs teach through different learning styles. For example, tactile learning is available through our poster, photography and graphic design contests; and visual and auditory learning comes through our LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) conference speakers and ranch tours,” she says. “NJAA also offers character-development skills through public speaking, team building and career networking to create well-rounded individuals.”

Build leadership through conferences

Junior members like Keyes who have attended LEAD or

Raising the Bar conferences or participated in the Junior Mentoring Program say they’ve expanded their leadership skills.

“Leadership development is highly demonstrated through these three programs,” says Upperman. For example, attendees are called upon to lead icebreakers in front of their peers and discuss issues with keynote speakers and ranch owners. Junior members learn to interact with others to accomplish certain tasks or thoughts. They can then take the activities and experiences they’ve learned back to their states and encourage other member involvement.

“The LEAD conference is a great way for juniors to see how various operations throughout our industry run,” says Cory Watt, NJAA chairman from Iva, S.C. “In addition to leadership skills, workshops help teach you how to set goals and practice teamwork.”

Tyler Coleman, junior member from Modesto, Calif., has attended LEAD.

“The conference truly allowed me to network with other juniors that I may not have had the opportunity to talk with at shows. The activities are a lot of fun, and they really get you involved,” he says.

Keyes has found the LEAD and Raising the Bar conferences put juniors in positions where they must meet new people and reach outside their comfort zones to participate.

“I used to be shy and not the least bit outgoing,” she says. “Attending nationals, Raising the Bar and LEAD conferences has made me not only a better leader, but a more outgoing person.”

John Pfeiffer Jr., American Angus Association director and NJAA advisor from Mulhall, Okla., says such comments demonstrate that LEAD is serving its purpose.

“One of the best leadership opportunities we offer is learning how to speak in public. It is a skill you need later in life,” he says. “LEAD, our public speaking contest and several of these other activities allow juniors to practice skills and become more confident in their abilities to succeed.”

Watt believes juniors who serve as NJAA voting delegates representing their states at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) further develop leadership skills.

“Delegates get the opportunity to talk to the candidates and take on the responsibility to choose future leaders,” he says. “Being a junior board member

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has been a great opportunity for me and has developed my leadership skills tremendously.”

Destiny McCauley, 2014 Angus Foundation Spader Scholarship recipient from Bowling Green, Fla., finds the Mentoring Program has expanded her leadership capabilities. In 2012, she mentored a first-time NJAS exhibitor. She helped a 9-year-old throughout the show with things such as fitting his calf and answering questions from him and his parents.

“I saw a huge impact. It was very rewarding,” she says. “You get a different perspective.”

Explore diverse NJAS opportunities

The NJAS offers an increasing number of contests and activities beyond the Mentoring Program.

“The number of different programs, projects and competitions available help junior members to grow by allowing them to develop their interests as they mature,” says Coleman.

As members get older and compete in various contests, they have the opportunity to prepare for the future, adds Watt. “Contest and program participation improves communication skills and allows you to network and open many doors. There are countless opportunities to meet other juniors from across the nation and create relationships that will last a lifetime,” he says.

McCauley believes participating in contests through the years has helped her learn what she is good at and where her passions lie. She has tried the team fitting competition, along with quiz bowl, and the graphic design and writing contests. As a reporter for *The Scoop*, an NJAA publication produced by juniors, and as a member of the new Media Crew, McCauley interviewed the NJAA Angus Ambassador.

“That allowed me to see a different side of the business,” she says. “Through all of these activities, I have learned the value of giving back to the breed.”

A list of all the NJAS contests, which also



National Jr. Angus Board

include

a cook-off, photography and video, team sales and quiz bowl, is available at www.angus.org/NJAA/contests.

“Team competitions are great experience, especially if you plan a career in production agriculture,” says Pfeiffer. “I taught school for 30 years. Having students get in front of their peers to explain or demonstrate something is good practice. For example, if you have an understanding of what is and is not eligible for *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®), you can

explain that to other beef producers and talk about CAB’s virtues with consumers.”

Encourage adult involvement

Adult guidance is critical for NJAA program and NJAS contest success, as juniors build life and social skills.

“This is a good way for youth to learn to take on the world,” says Upperman.

Keyes appreciates when adults are involved with helping junior members learn, because she says her

generation is the future of not only the Angus industry, but also the agriculture industry.

“We want to know we are on the right track to further improving the Angus breed and agriculture,” she says. “We want adults to support us by volunteering at state and national shows and judging contests. That is vital to the success of the junior association.”

It is a great cultural showcase being involved with the NJAA. I hope all juniors will get involved and take advantage of every opportunity they can to participate in these events.”

— **Jaelyn Upperman**



Speech contest

Pfeiffer

agrees that American Angus Association staff and outside resources should be involved with meetings and competitions. “We

need to increase participation and

get more adults involved, from local to national events. Association advisors take on these roles, but as budgets get tighter, we need more volunteers to take charge and provide kids with more opportunities.”

Watt encourages adult volunteers to also be positive role models.

“Encourage us to set personal goals for ourselves,” he adds. “It is also important that adults provide guidance and direction to ensure that we stay on the right path and reach our goals.”

Upperman encourages adult members to consider contributions to the Angus Foundation as a way to give back to the breed and to help improve and fund junior events.

McCauley appreciates that her mom, who also was a state association advisor, pushed her and other juniors to get involved with contests and expand their skills.

“Even though we may have been hesitant to try a contest, we were always glad we did them after the fact,” she says. “There is so much you can learn about life in and out of the showing.”

Upperman agrees.

“When I was growing up, many of my peers had never been out of the state. Yet I was traveling and sightseeing [in] places across the country,” she says. “It is a great cultural showcase being involved with the NJAA. I hope all juniors will get involved and take advantage of every opportunity they can to participate in these events.”



Editor’s Note: A former National Junior Angus Board member, Barb Baylor Anderson is a freelancer from Edwardsville, Ill.