

# Use Your Words

Creativity is abundant in NJAS writing winners.

compiled by **Kasey Brown**, associate editor

**E**ffective communication can make the difference between success, mediocrity and failure. Creativity makes things interesting and enhances those communication skills. Three National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members combined creativity, writing skill and Angus cattle to win the NJAA Creative Writing Contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Kansas City, Mo., July 5-11.

Co-sponsored by the NJAA and the Junior Activities Department of the American Angus Association, the writing contest is designed to encourage the enhancement of written communication skills while providing another opportunity for NJAA members to compete prior to the NJAS. Entries were due May 15 and evaluated prior to the NJAS.

Junior entrants were asked to write an essay between 300 and 500

words describing the person or event that sparked their interest to become active in the NJAA and why. Intermediate entries used 600-800 words to explain how their involvement in leadership programs is vital to success in the NJAA and in life.

Senior entrants used 1,800-2,000 words to answer the question: As you evaluate the current issues in the beef industry and the information available to you as an Angus breeder, where do you see the breed in five years?

Contest victors were Madison Weaver, Ephrata, Pa., junior division; Katie Friederichs, Walcott, Iowa, intermediate division; and Esther McCabe, Elk City, Kan., senior division. See the photos with this story for those placing second and third in the respective divisions.

Here are the winning entries.

## Be the Candle

by **Madison Weaver**, junior winner

**J**ohn Quincy Adams said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

Andrea Foore is a dear friend that has been my motivation to get involved in Angus activities. Andrea is a leader who sparked my interest to become active in the NJAA by being a good friend, good student, role model and hard worker.

Andrea has influenced me by setting good examples and being a positive role model. She's been part of the Pennsylvania Angus Royalty court for years and encouraged me to participate. I've now enjoyed promoting the Angus industry on the court for three years!

I was very shy when I joined the state Angus association. With her help, I've been able to step out of my comfort zone and participate in NJAA contests like extemporaneous speaking, serve on committees, and participate in Mini LEAD

(Leaders Engaged in Angus Development). Andrea has won NJAA contests, scholarships, served as Pennsylvania Junior Angus president, and tries to attend LEAD every year. I think these activities have made her the leader she is today. I hope I can follow in her footsteps. I can't wait until I'm old enough to attend LEAD!

Andrea has the heart of a teacher. My showmanship skills have improved dramatically with her coaching the past three years. I used to place in the middle of my class, at best. This year I was honored to win the Junior Showmanship Division at MAJAC (Mid-Atlantic Junior Angus Classic). From her experience on the Pennsylvania 4-H Livestock Judging Team, she has helped me develop my judging skills. When I goof up or end up at the bottom of my class, I can count on Andrea to offer encouraging words to keep me in the game and try harder next time. Her warm smile makes her the type of friend that reaches for your hand and touches your heart.

As a mentor, Andrea has shown me so

many activities I can experience, besides showing cattle with the NJAA. Without her influence, I may have missed opportunities and other friendships. There is so much to do in addition to the showing!

Speaking of the showing, it's important to be a humble winner and a classy loser. Andrea shared that, "as long as you learn from the experience, you lose nothing."

She learned that from one of her Angus mentors. At last year's NJAS, tornado-like winds created a blackout in the area and our hotel. According to Andrea, the dark was like a test of a person's character. A person's character is who they really are when no one is looking or can't see you. She puts a positive spin on everything!

Edith Wharton has said, "There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it." Andrea Foore has "sparked" my desire to continue to grow and experience all the NJAA has to offer, including to inspire other junior members.



Madison Weaver

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# The Dance

by **Katie Friederichs**, intermediate winner

Life's a dance you learn as you go. Sometimes you lead, sometimes you follow. Don't worry about what you don't know." The above lyrics from John Michael Montgomery's song *Life's a Dance* are my rhythm for life. Each step, shake, twist and twirl is one after another reflecting our position in the dance.

To me, leadership programs are the perfect way to meet others to learn and teach new steps to spark the tempo of the dance. People we meet along the way and lessons learned can teach us a new move or improve one. Leadership programs, for me, are essential for my success as an NJAA member and in life because they help me to discover my strengths and weaknesses, teach me how to persevere when I stumble, and essentially help improve others' dances.

To make the most out of all God has given me and become the best person I can be, I must be able to recognize when it's my time to lead and follow. Leadership roles are a way for me to share my knowledge, yet learn so much from the others within the program. Being the treasurer of my FFA Chapter, Iowa State 4-H Council and County 4-H Council

member, Iowa Junior Beef Breeds director, Iowa Junior Angus Association historian, Southeast Iowa Junior Angus Association president and Miss Iowa Angus, I have met many people with different tempos and moves.



**Katie Friederichs**

Although I am considered a leader in these particular organizations, everyone has specific areas that they are better at than others. Organization and communication are a couple of areas I have found to be strengths. However,

when it comes to a task that is artistic and creative, I follow to learn. The ability to know when to lead and follow is indispensable. To be successful, everyone's strengths within an organization are needed to make it the best it can be. When I open up and recognize my strengths and weaknesses, I am also better able to contribute my part of the dance.

As the song continues, the lyrics "picked myself up and came back for more" serve as a message to always persevere. Whether you're in a leadership position or not, perseverance and courage are needed to help us get back up after a fall. As a leader, however, the ability to put a smile on your

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face, get yourself up and motivate others to get up and keep dancing is indescribable. I believe that serving in a leadership role in any facet allows people to test themselves and realize their ability to keep others going in a time of commotion. I have found this to be the case personally. When you expand your comfort zone and let yourself fall, you learn just how successful you can be and help others to be when you get back up and try that move again.

Ultimately one of the most important parts of the dance is helping others to improve on their own. It is the difference between the Radio City Rockettes and the Teletubbies. One is graceful and in-sync and the other is scattered and unorganized. It is critical to realize that as a part of an organization, you are only as strong as your weakest player. Therefore, we must bring everyone up.

Out of everything that I have learned in a leadership role, the most essential is realizing that my success depends on the success of the others. In the NJAA and life especially, some people are harder to work with than others, but the skills and steps I have acquired

## CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST



► Winning the junior division are (from left) **Sophia Patchin**, Des Moines, Iowa, second; and **Madison Weaver**, Ephrata, Pa., first. Not pictured is **Wilhelmina Voight**, Fredericksburg, Pa., third.



► Winning the intermediate division are (from left) **Will Pohlman**, Prairie Grove, Ark., third; **Katie Friederichs**, Walcott, Iowa, first; and **Heidi Tremaine**, Oconomowoc, Wis., second.



► Winning the senior division of creative writing are (from left) **Brooke Harward**, Richfield, N.C., second; and **Esther McCabe**, Elk City, Kan., first. Not pictured is **Tyler Ottensmeier**, McLouth, Kan., third.

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through my dance of life and leadership opportunities will help me help them.

Strengths. Stumbles. Successes. The triple S's describe the dance of life. Leadership programs are key to improving the successes of an organization in the NJAA and in all

aspects of life. Determining my strengths and weaknesses, getting back up after stumbling and realizing success as a team is more victorious are benefits that I have received as a leader. Now, whether you're a two-step, ballet, hip-hop or line dancer, just remember

the triple S's, lead and follow, but most importantly, just get out on the dance floor of life and make it count!



# Angus Means Business

by **Esther McCabe**, senior winner

**W**hat do the Roman Empire and companies like Kodak and General Motors all have in common? History tells us that while getting to the top of your game is one thing, staying there is another. American author Louis L'Amour once said, "Nobody got anywhere in the world by simply being content."

Before we look ahead to the future, let's have another blast from the past. The decade is the 1970s. Disney World was first opened, the floppy disk was invented and the first portable cell phone call was made in New York City! This decade brought many advances that forever changed the way society functioned.

The tables also turned in the cattle industry. As a breed organization, in order to always be the best it can be, the association cannot ever be fully content with its current status.

The Hereford breed dominated the others in both registrations and acceptance by the rancher. After being on top, it became complacent and set the cruise control. The struggling American Angus Association (AAA) saw the need to be bold and try something that had never been done. The creation of the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand in 1978 truly changed the rules of how the breeds would operate.

Since those early CAB years, the Angus breed has gained popularity among commercial cattlemen. In order to qualify for CAB, the cattle have live requirements to meet in order to have their end product considered for the originally eight, now 10,

carcass specifications. In order to get the premium for their calves, they need Angus genetics. The breed saw a need to create programs that make Angus genetics more traceable. The results are age- and source-verification programs known today as AngusSource® and Gateway that allow for more farmers and ranchers to get involved.



**Esther McCabe**

By having these tools available for producers to utilize, it allows for the demand of Angus to increase. In 2012, more than 60% of the commercial cattlemen's herd consisted of Angus or Angus-cross cattle. With success like this, the Association can be optimistic about the upcoming years. When the American Angus Association began to make decisions that would result in today's current status, one has to wonder if even those involved would realize the incredible impact they would have.

Over the years, all aspects of life have become more dependent on the use of technology. Some associations accept new ways better than others. The Angus Association looks with confidence to incorporating the newest technology advances into making everything more user-friendly for the producer. The AAA Login allows for any member of the Association to log on and view their account. Within their account, there are numerous options available to obtain the information they are searching for. Angus Information Management Software, also known as AIMS, is also a tool available for producers to allow them to keep all their herd records in one location.

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## Genetic advances

While these tools are helpful to the recordkeeping side of herd management, there are also technology advances that help on the genetic side of improving herds. One of these tools that can be used is \$Value indexes. They are used to help give the producer a better idea of what they can anticipate for their herd's offspring compared to calves raised in a similar environment.

On a similar note, there are many breeds and species that utilize expected progeny differences (EPDs) to assist in predicting the performance of their offspring. However, the Angus breed has taken EPDs one step further. They have created a way with more precision to provide increased accuracy about a specific animal in their herd. *BEEF* magazine conducted an interview with breed association representatives.

Wade Shafer, American Simmental Association director of performance programs says, "As time progresses, other breeds will come online with genomic-enhanced EPDs. The logical way to use genomic information effectively is to have it

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incorporated into the EPD,” he says. “Right now, Angus is the only breed that does.”

The AAA also includes one other beneficial tool for its members. Every week, they release updated EPDs in all traits. No other breed association in the world does this. Wade Shafer makes an excellent point when he says, “Angus is the only breed that does.” The AAA and the breed as a whole are always first in line to accept new technology that will be beneficial to everyone.

Another way that the Angus Association tries to work with the producers is by allowing there to be various forms of one requirement. An example of this that is not as new as genomic-enhanced EPDs, but it is used by many producers because of convenience, would be freeze brands. The Angus breed recognizes the demand for freeze brands compared to tattoos and allows it to be an option as a way to have permanent identification. A producer can freeze-brand any breed that they want, but there are some associations that only accept tattoos as the official identification.

### People make the difference

Any breed can have exceptional cattle, information and records. However, it is the people of the breed who truly make all the difference. The staff of the AAA are always willing to answer questions and help any members that come their way. They provide the service and turn-around time that makes it convenient and simple for the producers to turn in information and feel confident they will receive the reports they need on time. It is also the leaders of the breed who make the decisions that have an effect on the largest and smallest of herds.

When the breed was faced with the devastation of widespread genetic defects, the options were evaluated, and the decisions were made. The breed as a whole, with over 6,000 members, would follow down the same path in order to overcome the challenge we were faced with. The Angus Association, in my opinion, follows what J.K. Rowling once said: “We are only as strong as we are united.” The decisions that have been made reflect this because everything done is to be beneficial to the Association as a whole, so we can progress as one toward common goals.

### What does the future hold?

As we take a sneak peak into the Angus crystal ball, we can envision that future holds

more opportunities for the breed to discover new ways to adapt to the ever-changing environment. No matter the industry, there will always be obstacles that throw curveballs into the plans made. The livestock industry as a whole is faced on a daily basis with challenges presented by the media, as well as animal-rights organizations. In the years to come, how we deal with the media issues will help depict our future. It is the responsibility of the industry and the individuals of it to promote our side of the story. In five years, more producers will share their daily lives online to help tell the real story of what happens in agriculture. There are already many Angus breeders who were among the first to choose to share their family’s story with the world!

The crystal ball also shows that the Angus breed is also going to still be looked to by other breeds in terms of the direction they should be heading. Angus is the leader, the dominant breed that has influenced many others. Even though the cow numbers are down from previous years and the acres we have to raise them on are dwindling as well, research has shown that Angus cattle or Angus-influenced cattle perform better and are more efficient in turning feed to finished product.

As prices fluctuate, it has become and will continue to be more vital to have proven genetics that are proficient in this area. With genomic-enhanced EPDs, this is a trait that can be evaluated and commercial cattlemen can select the bull that best fits their program with greater precision than before.

Angus cattle are going to continue to set the bar and follow the path of what the Angus cow was designed to achieve. Ideally, they are functional cattle that can wean a calf that is a high percentage of their body weight. The Angus cow should have longevity that is able to be outstanding in reproduction. Five years down the road, the Angus breed should still be the leader for low birth weight, high growth and industry-leading carcass quality.

Throughout the Angus breed’s history, it has shown that Angus cattle are able to prove what their paper says they are able to do. The breed is known to stay on the path that proves what the Angus cow was designed to accomplish, and not chase the latest fads like other breeds have done. The AAA and the producers who utilize the newest tools provided to them, coupled with the knowledge gained over the years about where the Angus cow’s place is among the other breeds and where they excel, have the

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ability to make the future of the Angus breed brighter than ever before.

What the future holds is up to us. It is our decision what it will unfold. The Angus breed looks ahead with optimism for the possibilities and what it can accomplish as time passes. It has already provided numerous options that are available to assist the producer in making everything from recordkeeping to the latest EPDs available so the producer can make the best decisions possible for their herd.

The vision statement of the AAA is “To be the leading and most progressive, member-driven, consumer-focused beef organization in the world.”

As the years pass, the American Angus Association and the breed will change caretakers and leaders, but as long as we all can keep the same end picture in mind, like our parents and grandparents were able to, we can continue down the same path to a bright future. The Angus breed is phenomenal to be a part of because of the people we are able to work with.

A breed can have all the technology advances, data and information available, but if the producers are only in the cattle business and not the people business as well, that is when we will begin to be just another breed. Our cattle set us apart from the other breeds because of what the people have created and being accepting of new advances in order to get us to where we are today.

No one can predict where the Angus breed will be exactly in five years. They say that history repeats itself. However, the past is giving the prediction that the future is bright because Angus is a business-driven breed with many reasons to be respected throughout the industry. In fact, Angus means business.



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