

Aberdeen in twenty-thirteen

2013 National Jr. Angus Show • Kansas City, Mo.



PHOTO BY KASEY BROWN

► After being paired at the Mentoring Mixer, Maddi Butler and Jaden Tweedy got to know each other better through a lighthearted scavenger hunt that included items such as black socks and bobby pins.

► Butler and Tweedy bonded throughout the NJAS as they spent time together as part of the NJAA Mentoring Program.



Learning From Experience

Angus juniors involved in the mentoring program build lasting relationships.

Story & photos by **Lynsey Meharg**, intern

The National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) can be quite the experience for a first-time exhibitor. All of the states represented, contests offered and cattle exhibited can be a lot to take in for a young person involved in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). However, the opportunities presented during NJAS are the kind that build character and provide the skills to succeed even after everyone has dispersed to their home states.

One such opportunity is the mentoring program.

The NJAA Mentoring Program is designed to match juniors more experienced with the NJAS to first- and second-time exhibitors so that both members can take full advantage of their time at junior nationals. The program was started at the 2002 NJAS, making this the 12th year for the program.

Mentors are encouraged to share information about contests and NJAA rules with their protégés while they introduce their protégé to other members their own age

throughout the week. The program is a way for NJAA members to expand their networks while making new friendships along the way.

Meeting the mentors

“The mentoring program is a great avenue for new or young junior members by creating friendships and involving them in the endless



► The signature booklets provide a structure to encourage protégés participating in the mentoring program to introduce themselves to American Angus Association staff and other members to request their signatures.

opportunities at the National Junior Angus Show,” says Jaclyn Upperman, director of junior activities for the American Angus Association.

Though the goal may be to make connections, the mentoring program also offers juniors the opportunity to build a relationship with an older member. The relationships built can last for years and make a lasting impact on those members involved.

The process begins at a mentoring mixer convened at the beginning of the week, where mentors are matched with protégés. Rules for the pairing are simple: the mentor and protégé must be from different states. This is to ensure that the maximum benefit of being surrounded by such a diverse group of juniors can be realized.

“I’ve enjoyed my little mentee!” says Maddi Butler of Vincennes, Ind. Maddi says she admires her protégé, Jaden Tweedy of Pocahontas, Ark., for her ability to walk up to just about anyone to ask for a signature.



► **Left:** As part of the mentoring program, Butler and Tweedy would spend the week collecting signatures. Waiting by the backdrop during the show, the pair succeeded in capturing Miss American Angus Esther McCabe's signature.

► **Below:** Tweedy spoke with McCabe as McCabe signed her booklet between photos at the backdrop.



► **Above:** Butler and Tweedy spotted junior board candidate Shane Kerner of Idaho during the show in Hale arena. The Mentoring Program offers juniors the opportunity to network with Association staff and build relationships with other juniors.

► **Below:** Sighting Association CEO Bryce Schumann in the stands watching the show with Board member John Elbert Harrell, Butler encourages Tweedy to introduce herself and ask for Schumann's signature.



"She's very talkative, she's not afraid to meet new people and she's got the cutest accent," Maddi says of Jaden.

Maddi and Jaden were paired together during the Mentoring Mixer where the protégés formed a circle and the mentors tossed in crumbled up cards with their names on them. Jaden picked up Maddi's card, which began a fun-filled week for both members. After the pair had been assigned and introduced, their first task would put their new friendship to the test.

"This year's mentoring mixer included a new feature, a scavenger hunt," says junior activities intern Melissa Keyes. "The scavenger hunt provided a fun environment for mentors and protégés to break the ice and start off their week."

As the rules were explained, each pair listened intently and waited for permission to rush off to the barns in search of a list of items. After retrieving a Flat Andy, something purple, a red bucket, a black sock and a bobby pin, participants returned.

As the mass of NJAA members patiently waited for all to return, they chatted with other pairs and continued to learn new things about each other while beginning to scout for signatures. Finally, each pair's items were accounted for and they were then given the booklet they would use to collect signatures throughout the week, fostering interaction with adults, as well as junior members.

The opportunity to build relationships through the mentoring program is endless, and soon Jaden introduced Maddi to her

"I enjoy working with youth because someday they will be leading our organization in the direction it needs to go."

— Maddi Butler

sisters as the pair visited both the Arkansas and Indiana state stalls. Reasoning that finding each other would be easier throughout the week if they knew the individuals from the other's state, both girls added people from Arkansas and Indiana to their list of new friends. The pair would spend the rest of the day searching for signatures and learning about each other as they combed the barns.

A week of relationships

The following morning, Jaden found



Maddi in the Indiana stalls, and they began their search again. Working for about an hour, Jaden and Maddi located several more signatures before the day became too busy, forcing them to continue their quest the next day. Maddi's dedication to giving Jaden the most positive NJAS experience she could was evident all week.

"I think it's important to make that

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