

Lights, Camera, Angus!

New NJAS contest shows juniors' creativity through videos.

by Kasey Miller

Have you ever thought about what it takes to make *The Angus Report* or *I Am Angus*? It takes a good deal of time and work behind the scenes to make even short clips of video. The success of both of these programs is a testament that the behind-the-scenes work pays off, and that is something that members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) can now learn firsthand. 2012 marks the inaugural year for the new video contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

The new contest was the brainchild of Shane Clary, 2011-2012 membership director of the NJAA Board of Directors. He says the new contest is a way for juniors to participate even if they couldn't attend the show. Through this contest, juniors can improve their speaking skills and use of technology, all while gaining more knowledge of the Association.

Contestants create a commercial, the length varying by age division, to promote the American Angus Association from their point of view. Clary says the benefits for juniors are well worth the time to create the contest.

"I don't have any experience making videos, but working with the 'Champions



► Final Cut Pro is used to edit *The Angus Report* and *I Am Angus*. The judges said they do not look for professional-type videos, just videos with thoughtful structure and creativity.

to Champions' show last year was a great experience, and I saw how influential it was to the people who watched," he explains. "I would like for the juniors to gain more knowledge of their Association and be able

to express themselves verbally to others on the great things that are offered through our Association."

Robin Ruff, director of junior activities at the Association, adds, "Juniors can use this contest to find creative ways to inform others about the NJAA, their involvement and why they enjoy being involved so much."

These benefits are great, but how does one get started? The thought of creating a video from scratch can be daunting, but the contest judges gave some tips for participants considering entering next year, both in creating the idea and putting the video together.

Content tips

Eric Grant, director of communications and public relations (PR) at the Association, says, "What really makes the difference is the story-telling aspect of it — whether it holds your attention, whether it's something you want to watch. There can be videos that are very poorly edited, but actually are very interesting to watch. It just depends on what you make of it."



► The video contest judges recommended using a tripod to stabilize the camera. Many kinds of cameras can be attached to the top.



► An external microphone will help the audio quality of your video. Be sure that the microphone is compatible with your camera, though.

Derrick Collins, media specialist in the Association communications and PR department, says judges aren't looking for professional videos, but the videos should have a structure that makes sense. He wants to see thought in the presentation.

Ellie Hoffschneider, Association communications and PR department intern, adds that judges want to see accuracy and consistency in content. She suggests finding your subject and keeping that theme throughout the whole process.

The time limit can be a constraint or a tool, notes Collins. The videos must tell the story and hold attention visually during a short amount of time. Don't try to cram too many things into the video, though. Grant says to allow yourself to stay in the shot when filming. He recommends getting 10 seconds of footage before moving on.

Grant explains that when they are working on a show for *The Angus Report* or *I Am Angus*, the PR team tries to keep one thing in mind: "Less is more. The objective of the video is to engage them all the way through—keep them interested all the way through. Part of peaking that interest is not giving them everything you can possibly think of."

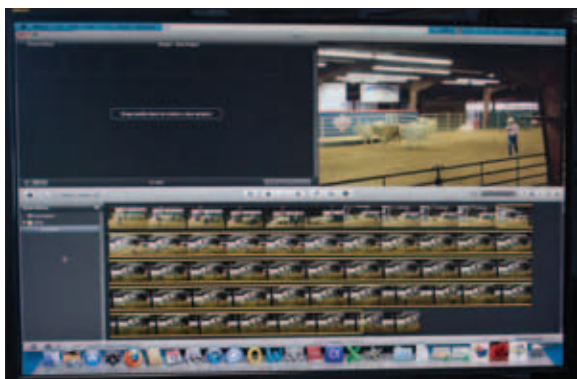
Collins agrees, suggesting to "figure out what to say and say it as simply as possible." Sometimes, too much information has the same result as no information at all in a video.

Most of all, be authentic, Grant recommends. "People are attracted to authenticity."

Technical tips

"I am amazed by the technical expertise of kids in terms of video editing," commends Grant.

We live in an age where everyone has a video recorder on their phone and video



► Simple editing software can produce high-quality videos if used correctly. iMovie comes free on Macintosh computers.

Tips from the champions

Winners of this year's contest also had a few tips for juniors wanting to participate next year. Hannah Williams, Milan, Ga., age 9, won the junior division with her Oscar Meyer-themed commercial. She says she participated in the video contest because she really enjoys acting and performing, and this contest allowed her to combine acting and cattle.

Katlyn Tunstill, Fayetteville, Ark., age 17, won the intermediate division with her action-themed commercial. She created her video to expand her communications skills.

The time limit was important for both of them, and both contestants' limit was 60 seconds. Williams filmed her commercial straight through and picked the best take. Tunstill says she was always conscious of the time limit: "I was afraid I would make it too long and people would get bored, or that I would make it too short and not have enough information."

Williams had her family help with filming. From start to finish, the whole process took about a week for her.

Tunstill's family gave her feedback during editing. She used iMovie for editing, but she recommends using QuickTime to get started.

"It makes the process a lot easier by providing step-by-step instructions to making a great video," she says.

Williams says the best part about creating the video was singing in it.

Tunstill says her favorite part of the process was watching the finished product and the pride that accompanied that.

"After editing all the finishing touches, sitting back and watching the video once it's done is such a great feeling," she adds.

editing software on Mac laptops. While those can produce great videos if used correctly, there are some tricks of the trade that can make a video stand out more.

Stabilize your camera when filming. Grant asserts that it doesn't take much to stabilize a camera (Wal-Mart has affordable tripods), but it makes a world of difference. You can also be creative and use other objects to stabilize the camera if the shot will be still, like fence posts, truck beds, show boxes, etc.

The video's audio is also much better with a microphone. Most cameras have a built-in mic, but built-in mics will usually pick up noise that will distract from the video or may not be strong enough to pick up sound if the subject is too far away. Lapel mics or even handheld mics are available at electronics stores. Grant warns that not all mics are compatible with all cameras, so make sure the model numbers match.

Creativity is essential when creating videos, both in shooting footage and in the editing process. Grant advises shooting things in different ways than normal.

"Do things in reverse, not in the way you think they should be. The temptation is for sameness, but put your fingerprint on your own style and shoot in unexpected ways," he encourages.

For example, most people shoot with the sun behind the subject, he notes, but it looks better on video for the sun to be in front of the subject. He admits his best videos are when he physically forces himself to shoot unconventionally.

Creative footage can easily be ruined with bad editing. Hoffschneider says that editing mistakes can destroy the idea behind the video, so take your time. She also recommends shooting extra footage so there is enough to edit.

Editing technology is abundant. Grant and Collins mention that iMovie is free on Mac laptops, and Pinnacle Studio and Camtasia are both relatively affordable. Collins notes that some cameras even come with editing software. Simple editing software is sufficient, but they say the mark of an amateur video is an overload of transitions and graphics. There are also many production tutorials online for beginners and more advanced contestants.

Most of all, though, the judges say to have some fun.

"The Peterson Brothers video ('I'm Farming and I Grow It') was huge, and it combined video skills with their passion for agriculture to share their story. I think it's a great medium for youth, especially Angus youth, to get involved and share their story through video," Hoffschneider concludes. "Video is exciting, video is interesting, so it's definitely a good future."