

Crystal Clear Goals

Prestigious Crystal Award rewards hard work in educational contests.

by Kasey Brown, associate editor

There is something to be said of the goals of determined youth. When they make up their mind to earn an award, determination coupled with hard work often leads to success. Such is the case with at least four Crystal Award winners. They saw the beautiful crystal trophy, decided they would win it, and set about the hard work and preparation to do so.

Starting in 1999, the Janet Castle Crystal Award was designed by the American Angus Auxiliary to award one girl and one boy National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) member who participated and excelled in the many educational contests at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

Award history

Kathi Creamer, current chair of the Crystal Award, explains that in 1997, Judy Castle Fairchild donated the Boehm Angus statue in honor of her mother, Janet Castle. The statue was sold at the All-American Angus Breeders' Futurity in Louisville, Ky., for \$4,500 to Dave McMahon. The proceeds were divided so \$2,000 funded a scholarship in memory of Janet Castle, \$2,000 to Judy Castle Fairchild, and the final \$500 was deposited in an interest-bearing account that would fund future undetermined uses.

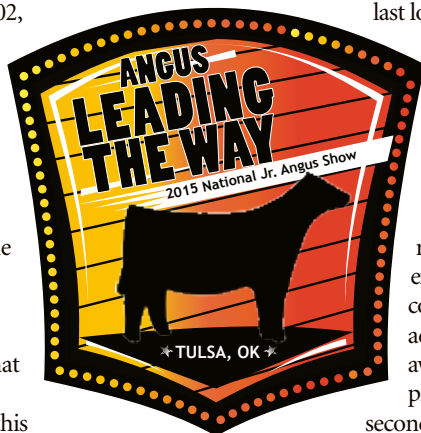
Knowing the initial \$2,000 wouldn't fund the award forever, Cathy Watkins, original and long-time Auxiliary chair of the Crystal Award, stepped in. In 2002, Watkins owned the top-selling bull, BR Midland, at the Midland Bull Test.

"We wanted to use those funds to give back to the Angus breed, especially the juniors," she explains, "so what better way than to fund the Crystal Award for five years? Bob and I knew that the Castle donation wouldn't last forever, so this



► The Crystal Award is presented by the American Angus Auxiliary to the top boy and top girl in contest performance at the National Junior Angus Show. Pictured are (from left) Will Pohlman, Prairie Grove, Ark., top boy; Kathi Creamer, presenter; and Keegan Cassady, Normal, Ill., top girl.

could give the extra push to make those funds last longer."



How to win

The prestigious Crystal Award goes to the high-scoring boy and girl in the educational contests, regardless of age, Watkins explains. Participation in a contest earns 1 point, and additional points are awarded for placing. First-place winners get 7 points, second-place winners get 5

points, and third-place winners get 3 points. Team events are awarded with the same point levels.

To avoid skewing of points for contests with multiple divisions, like the photography or the All-American Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) Cook-Off, Watkins says participants only get one score from the contest, but they get their highest score. So, for example, if a junior gets an honorable mention in one photography category, second place in another and wins another category, they will earn 7 points for their category winner. For these contests with multiple divisions, there are no additional points given for participation, but there are more chances to earn placing points by entering multiple divisions.

Additionally, some contests are only for certain age divisions, like the poster contest is only for junior participants. However, it is balanced by the intermediate- and senior-only Career Development contest.

"We don't do a Crystal Award by age; anybody can win it — the youngest person or the oldest person," Watkins says. Ties aren't broken either. If two juniors of the same gender perform that well in the educational contests, Watkins notes that both of the juniors will be awarded.

Winning the Crystal Award takes dedication, participation and preparation. Creamer says these contests provide great preparation for real life by developing communication skills and leadership. Juniors learn to present and stand up for their thoughts and gain good preparation for future job interviews.

"Life is not just walking out there and getting something handed to you. It's being able to withstand competition and feel comfortable in that situation. That's probably the biggest skill that our young people walk away with from these activities," she emphasizes.

Watkins iterated three main keys that juniors take away from participating in

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► The Janet Castle Crystal Award was established by the American Angus Auxiliary as incentive for participation in educational contests at the NJAS.



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educational contests and striving for the Crystal Award — communication, learning in a fun environment and time management.

“Communication is so important, no matter what you do,” she emphasizes. She laughs and says many of the adult Association Board of Directors joke that they wouldn’t want to compete against the juniors in speech delivery.

She also enjoys seeing juniors laugh with each other while preparing for the Cook-Off skits or during quiz bowl. Junior participants are seen having fun or encouraging each other in individual contests, too, all while learning about the Angus industry and developing crucial skills.

Additionally, NJAS is jam-packed with things to do, and she notes that contest participants must be organized and prepared to meet the entry deadlines and to do well. She doesn’t want to downplay the contribution of parents to achieving these contest deadlines.

Jaclyn Clark, director of events and education for the American Angus Association, says the Crystal Award is one of the elite honors of the NJAA. In contrast to the Auxiliary’s Silver Pitcher Award, which highlights the top achievements in the showing, the Crystal Award rewards the performance of the juniors themselves.

“For those that might not excel in the showing, the Crystal Award is based on the juniors’ own performance,” she explains. “Performing well in educational contests takes dedication and hard work.”

Real-world applications

The Crystal Award is structured so that juniors can win it more than once. Garrett Lampe was one of the first two Crystal Award winners, and then won it three more times during his NJAA tenure. Now the herdsman at TopLine Farms in Tremont, Ill., Lampe says he still uses skills he learned from NJAS educational contests.

“Definitely team sales and the speaking contests taught me a lot about being able to communicate, whether one-on-one in the pasture or in a group setting,” he explains. “I’m able to convey what I want them to know and listen to find out what they want to know. I also give tours of our farm, and being able to present to different groups is really valuable.”

He and his family were successful in the showing, but he says educational

Opportunities to win the Crystal Award

Juniors can compete in 10 educational contests in an effort to win the Crystal Award.

- All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Cook-Off
- Career Development
- Creative Writing Contest
- Extemporaneous Public Speaking Contest
- Graphic Design
- NJAA/*Angus Journal* Photography Contest
- Quiz Bowl
- Poster Contest
- Prepared Public Speaking Contest
- Team Sales

contests were always pretty big in his family. His interest in contest participation sparked in 1995 when he saw the senior prepared public speaking contest.

“I saw those speeches and told my mom, ‘I can do that,’” Lampe says.

He participated in every contest available, and his favorites changed through the years. Being from Kansas, his team sales team had help from Mark Gardiner. Lampe says they were loaded with information, and the knowledge he gained on figures and expected progeny differences (EPDs) has helped him daily.

The fitting contest was added at the end of his NJAA tenure, and Lampe still uses those skills every day.

Hannah McCabe won the award several years and is now a cattle territory manager for Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc. in

New York. Also originally from Kansas, she got involved with educational contests through the Cook-Off. She says she enjoyed the social aspect of the team contest, and that social aspect prevailed throughout her career. She and her friends got more involved in the contests, and she found that prepared public speaking was a natural fit for her.

Now, as a pharmaceutical representative, she says she uses communication and people skills on a daily basis.

“By participating in these contests, you gain confidence interacting with other people and working on a team,” she shares. “You get really used to introducing yourself to people you’ve never met and having a conversation with them to communicate information you’ve learned. That’s what I do in my job every day. I introduce myself to people I’ve never met and communicate information that I think they’d benefit from and give it to them in a digestible format.”

McCabe says contests teach juniors commitment, discipline and good habits to achieve a goal. Those good habits translate into the adult world, as does stepping out of one’s comfort zone.

“Adult life is one big aspect of stepping out of your comfort zone,” she notes. “No one holds my hand or looks over my shoulder to ensure I’m doing my job correctly, so those good habits formed during the contests really translate well into real life.”

Both Lampe and McCabe encourage juniors to participate in contests. Many friendships were formed through contests for both of them. McCabe says that juniors will get out of contests what they put in, and it’s a great opportunity for participation if finances or distance prevent bringing cattle. For those juniors who did bring cattle, Lampe says that with family support at NJAS, the cattle in the stalls will be fine for an hour or so. He recommends being prepared to know when contest deadlines are, and where and when to be at contest rooms.

Both had role models who helped them learn and prepare for their contests, so they say don’t be afraid to ask for help. Many former NJAA members still attend NJAS in adult roles and are happy to pass knowledge to younger generations. Both decided at a young age that they wanted to win the Crystal Award, and they worked hard to achieve it.

