



Donate Life

Kansas junior Angus members work to raise awareness of life-saving opportunities.

Story & photo by **Kasey Brown**, associate editor

The organ donation message doesn't come up unless you know someone affected by it. If Tyler Blythe hadn't gotten that very unselfish transplant, he wouldn't be with us today. His family has made it their mission to spread the word about the issue now," says Alexandria Cozzitorto, Lawrence, Kan. The Kansas Junior Angus Association (KJAA) has joined in the Blythe family's mission to spread the word about blood and organ donation.

The KJAA used their stall display at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) to raise awareness and create action. Reid Shipman, Manhattan, Kan., adds, "Tyler makes it personal. Though he never wanted this to be about him, the Kansas juniors wanted to do something for him, and it was suggested to use the stall display to support him and raise awareness."

A banner in the stalls allowed people to sign their names in different colors to signify different things. Signing on the left side of the

banner in black meant that a person has donated blood or promises to do so. Signing in red meant that a person has or knows someone who has received blood. Signing on the right side of the banner in black signified whether someone is an organ donor. Signing in green showed that a person has or knows someone who has benefited from an organ donation.

In addition to illustrating how many in the Angus community have been affected by or involved in blood or organ donation, the KJAA initiated a social media campaign, Cozzitorto says. Using the hashtag #AngusKidsDonateLife, NJAS participants were encouraged to take a "selfie" (a photo taken by oneself with a cell phone) with the banner and post it to various social media platforms — Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

At the end of the week, Shipman explains, users who have posted with the #AngusKidsDonateLife hashtag would be

eligible for prizes, including several gift cards for show supplies. Cozzitorto noted that the goal was to have the hashtag "trend" at least once, which means that the hashtagged posts were prevalent on the respective social media platform.

Attendees could also sign up to become blood or organ donors at the KJAA booth. "We can save four lives with one donation of blood. Tyler needed 12 pints of blood from donors; that saved his life," Shipman emphasizes.

"I am a blood donor, I'm actually an organ donor, too," he says. "That's something I strongly believe in, I want to help anybody I can. That's what the Angus Association is about, too, helping anybody. We're all family!"



Editor's Note: For information on Tyler's experience, see "Second Chances," page 74. For information on how to become an organ donor, visit www.organdonor.gov.