



► Connor Cook, 12, of Huntley, Mont., sells a draft during an auctioneering clinic hosted at the 2017 National Junior Angus Show. Raised within a family of auctioneers, he was prepared. For more about the auctioneering clinic, watch this segment of *The Angus Report*: <https://youtu.be/6lOF5eHzzgs?t=2m13s>.

# FAST-TALKING PASSION

National Junior Angus Show holds first-ever auctioneer clinic to inspire Angus youth to be livestock marketers.

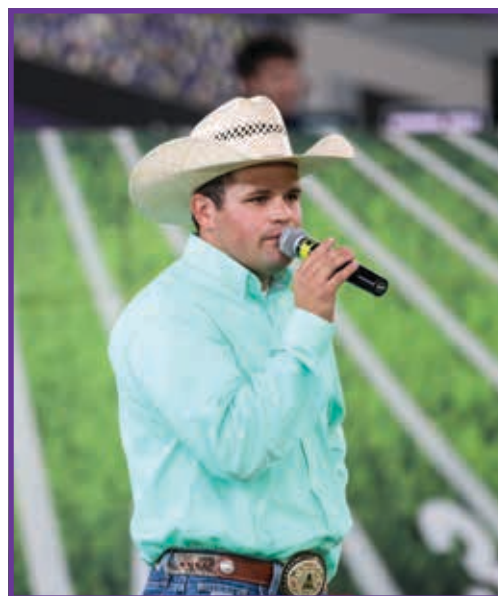
by *Morgan Marley, communications intern*

The first-ever auctioneer clinic was hosted at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) July 10 in Des Moines, Iowa. Will Epperly, Dunlap, Iowa, who recently placed third in the World Livestock Auctioneering Championship, hosted the clinic to teach Angus youth tips for success in this fast-talking occupation.

The clinic, says Epperly, “was intended to build a fire in young people who are aspiring auctioneers.” NJAS attendees of all ages filled the showring stands, eager to hear what he had to share.

“Auctioneering is just fun,” Epperly says. “My heart races every day. It’s an adrenaline rush. It’s a pleasure, not just to work for my customers, but I also call them friends at the end of the day.”

The NJAS organizes events throughout the week to educate its Angus juniors about different areas of the beef industry. Additionally, educational clinics provide networking opportunities for National Junior Angus Association (NJAA)



► Will Epperly, Dunlap, Iowa, hosted an auctioneering clinic to teach Angus youth tips for success in this fast-talking occupation. Epperly recently placed third in the World Livestock Auctioneering Championship.

members to find mentors in potential career fields.

“At NJAS clinics, juniors can learn new things, and when you’re sitting in the stands, you can meet new people,” says Connor Cook, 12, Huntley, Mont. “It’s also a good way to build relationships with the people putting on the clinics.”

For many attendants at the NJAS, it is about more than exhibiting cattle, although that is the major highlight of the week.

“When you step in the showring, it’s like it’s your stage,” Cook says. “It’s where your animal needs to be shown the way you want her to be shown. You represent her and your own ranch or who you bought her from.”

In addition to the show, the educational clinics are intended to bring everything full circle and inspire NJAA members to follow their passions.

“If you’re just getting started in the Association, clinics are really good practice

**AS AN AUCTIONEER, WILL EPPERLY KNOWS HE HAS AN IMPORTANT TASK. FOR MANY OF HIS CUSTOMERS, IT'S HIS JOB TO GET THE MOST FOR THE ONE CHECK THEY RECEIVE PER YEAR.**

and you learn new tips," Cook says. "It's also just a lot of fun."

### The tradition

For people like Cook and Epperly, auctioneering runs in their blood. They both come from a long line of auctioneers who have encouraged them to be their best.

"My family opened a sale barn in 1986, and we ran that barn until about 2004," Epperly says.

Hearing auctioneers like his grandfather and father throughout his childhood, Epperly says he immediately knew he wanted to pursue a career in auctioneering. Hearing the 1974 World Champion auctioneer, Ralph Way, sold him on it. When he told his grandfather that is what he wanted to do, there was no turning back.

"The next day my grandfather put me up in the block, and I sold my first goat," he says. "The first goat I sold weighed 75 pounds. I'll remember that until the day I die."

Raised in Virginia, Epperly knew he wanted to move west at a young age for the possibility of more auctioneering opportunities. He went to college and worked at a few sale barns before moving back home to take care of his father after an accident. Still, he knew he couldn't stay away from the block forever.

"In 2013, I got the call of a lifetime," Epperly says. "John Shaving called and offered me an interview for a job at the most respected sale barn in Iowa."

As an auctioneer, Epperly knows he has an important task. For many of his customers, it's his job to get the most for the one check they receive per year.

An even bigger task is encouraging youth in agriculture that a career in livestock marketing is fun and enjoyable.

Not many kids grow up with auctioneers as role models. For Cook, auctioneering is all he's ever known.

"The line of auctioneers in my family



► NJAS attendees of all ages filled the showing stands July 10 at the National Junior Angus Show, eager to hear what Will Epperly had to share about a career in auctioneering. Among those in attendance was Connor Cook of Huntley, Mont.

► National Junior Angus Director Corbin Cowles takes a turn at auctioneering during an educational clinic at the National Junior Angus Show.



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are my grandpa Pat Goggins, my uncle Joe Goggins, my Uncle Jake (Roger Jacobs), my cousin Greg Goggins, my dad and Ty Thompson, the 2009 World Champion auctioneer,” Cook says.

The family tradition started long before Cook was born.

“My mom told me when my Uncle Joe or my dad were selling, I’d always kick her tummy, kicking like I was wanting out,” Cook says. His mother has videos of him as a young child auctioneering behind his podium with toy holding pens, a salering and cattle strategically arranged in front.

“Auctioneering is just like Will said — it’s really fun,” Cook says.

He also understands the pressure and importance auctioneers hold in the sale barn.

“You make relationships with the buyers and producers,” Cook says. “It’s also a big job because it might be the consignor’s only paycheck, so it’s your job to get the most out of it.”

At the auctioneer clinic at the NJAS, Epperly chose Cook to sell a draft in front of the entire audience.

“I was nervous when Will pulled me out,” he says, “but once I got started, I loosened up. Every auctioneer gets nervous, but sooner or later, on the second draft, you just start having fun.”

Even at a young age, Cook insists he’s more experienced than most adults, and he isn’t afraid to show it.



PHOTO BY MORGAN MARLEY

► Connor Cook, 12, Huntley, Mont., has a pedigree steeped in Angus cattle and auctioneering. At the auctioneer clinic at the NJAS, Epperly chose Cook to sell a draft in front of the entire audience.

“I’m not saying I’m a professional yet, but I’m almost there,” Cook boasts.

For auctioneers like Epperly, it is a positive sign to see young people engaged and interested in auctioneering.

“I’ve known Connor’s family all my life, and he just comes from good people,” Epperly says. “It’s fun to see young people come in like that. It just warms my heart, to be honest.”

### NJAS is building the best

Like many people in the Angus business, Epperly’s career began in the NJAA and attending the NJAS.

“My first junior nationals was in 1999 in Tulsa, Okla., when I was 9,” Epperly says. “My father and brother will never let me live it down. They spent an hour and 30 minutes fitting my heifer, and since I was able to ride that heifer, I rode her to the ring.”

Beyond teaching his heifer to be ridden, Epperly believes in the NJAA and what it has to offer its juniors.

“This is one of the greatest programs for young people to get into,” he says. “You meet so many contacts within the Association and industry. You learn professional tools from public speaking to sales. It’s the things you learn and take on here that will benefit you in your future life.”

As an adult, Epperly can fully appreciate everything he gained as a junior member with the Angus breed. Looking at the current juniors encourages him to believe there is a strong future in animal agriculture and auctioneering.

“I’ve had kids come up and say, ‘I want to be like you,’” he says. “I challenge them to be better than me and beat me, and I think young people like Connor can beat me. They’re eager, they’re hungry, and they’re willing to learn.”

