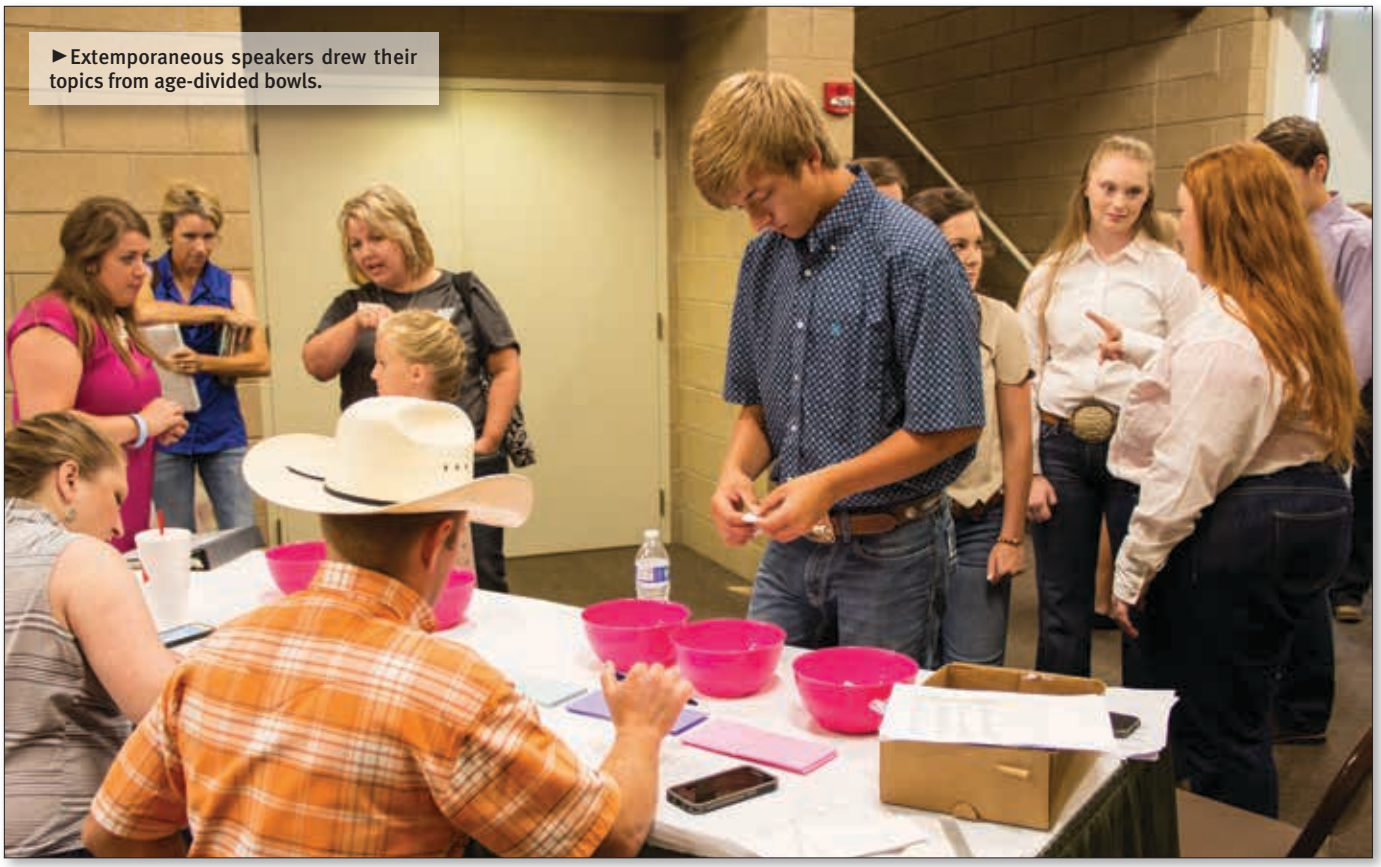

►Extemporaneous speakers drew their topics from age-divided bowls.

PHOTO BY KASEY BROWN

Public Speaking Pizazz

NJAA members exhibit poise during prepared public speaking.

*compiled by **Kasey Brown**, special projects editor*

PHOTO BY LEANN SCHLEICHER

Giving a speech gives written words pizazz. Communicating your point via spoken or written word is an important life lesson. It is a lesson that many National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members learn well. The winners of the NJAA Prepared Public Speaking Contest proved that by competing at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Des Moines, Iowa, July 9-15.

Junior and intermediate division contestants could speak on any subject pertaining to Angus cattle or the beef industry. Exploration of any and all phases of the industry was encouraged, with the topic prompts of current affairs, policies and trends. Senior division contestants were asked to address how the final veterinary feed directive (VFD) implementation has impacted the beef industry.

Speeches in the junior division were to be between 4 and 6 minutes in length, and intermediate and senior division speeches were to be 6-8 minutes long.

This year's winners were Samuel Jordan, Saint Joseph, Mo., junior A division; Tucker Stagemeyer, Page, Neb., junior B division; Eric Schafer, Owaneco, Ill., intermediate A division; Lauren Mosher, Liscomb, Iowa, intermediate B; and Keegan Cassady, Normal, Ill., senior division.

Cassady won a $1,000 scholarship from the *Angus Journal* for her senior division win. The winners of the younger divisions each won $125.

Here are two winning speeches, with the rest to be junior contributions to future Next Generation columns. Remember, these speeches were given orally, so there is an added element missing from the printed version.

Behind the Wheel

*by **Samuel Jordan,** junior A winner*

Good afternoon. My name is Samuel Jordan. This is my second year as a member of the National Junior Angus Association. Today, I will be sharing stories of me — behind the wheel!

I've been "driving" toy tractors and "farming" since before I could walk. Then I got to ride bikes, drive the pedal tractor and little kid ATV (all-terrain vehicle), but my eyes are always set on the next big thing!

Some of my favorite memories include time spent on my Nana and Papa's farm. Driving tractors on their farm tops my list. I enjoy helping Nana and Papa do chores, and I get excited when I know there is something for me to do. And, I'm always figuring out ways to help that include *me* behind the *wheel!*

When I was younger and visited my Nana and Papa on the farm, I would wake up early to go help chore. I wanted to go help. Plus, it was a real treat to ride in the farm truck.

We would check on the animals to make sure they were healthy and taken care of. In the hog barns, I helped pour feed into the sow feeders. Watching the baby pigs play always made me laugh. I would chase and try to catch them. We would also check on the cows and give them some hay and grain.

But, I had a tendency to wander off (and still do sometimes). They would find me on the old green tractor. That is where I would sit, pretend and daydream.

My turn finally came last year. At 10 years old, I got my chance to sit on a tractor all by myself. But not just sit, actually start it up and *drive!* You see, I've been allowed to sit with them, but never to drive on my very own! Of course, this hasn't been on that old green tractor just yet, but I have started to mow the lawn and haul things with the skid loader. I enjoy helping Nana and Papa mow the yard, but the skid loader is way more fun. This brought on a whole new set of responsibilities, but I was confident I could handle it.

They taught me that it is important to use precautions when working with tractors. I need to check to make sure the gas tank is full before I get started. The brake needs to be on before starting the skid loader, and the safety bar needs to be brought down over my head. My arms and legs should stay inside the machine at all times. I need to raise and turn the handles to move the bucket of the loader. It is also important to wear fitted clothing and my farm boots — good thing old clothes that are too short or tight to wear anywhere else are still acceptable on the farm.

So with this knowledge gained, I have helped do even more chores on the farm. I have hauled feed, manure, and other odds and ends. I can also take the bucket off and add the fork or vice-versa. I'm always looking for a reason to drive!

One day I helped move the dead timber from where it was being cut down to a pile in a nearby field. Using the gravel drive, I made several trips successfully. But one time I began heading the wrong way. So, I put the skid loader in reverse. It went backwards faster than I expected, and I almost ran into the electric pole! Whoops! Good thing my dad was nearby. So another thing I learned is that it is helpful to have another person around when operating machinery.

From mowing the grass to hauling branches and caring for the animals, I always enjoy helping on the farm — *especially behind the wheel!* I want to soak up more memories with my family (and drive more vehicles), so we will do our best to stay safe and watch out for one another.

And do you know what else? As a little tyke, I taught Nana and Papa something, too — to always hide their keys before I came to visit!

Agriculture, The Useless Degree?

*by **Eric Schafer,** intermediate A winner*

Suppertime at my house usually consists of my dad and mom discussing daily activities on the farm and my sister and I telling about our day at school. Our supper conversations are usually lively, but this fall my parents started one dinner conversation that my sister and I will never forget. You see, recently, Yahoo decided to post an article on "The Top 5 Most Useless College Majors." I could not believe my ears when my mom discussed how agriculture was reported the No. 1 most useless college degree (Yahoo Education).

After hearing this I had all sorts of questions for my mom and dad, who both have college degrees in agriculture and are both very successful in their fields. I was dumbfounded by this article, since I couldn't imagine any major that has more effect on the world than a profession in the field of agriculture.

Since I have been raised on a farm, I have always been told how our country was founded on agriculture and how our economy depends on it every day! It has been pounded into my head that education is very important in agriculture, and we need to continue to adopt new technology and strive to become more educated to be able to feed the ever-growing world's population.

But this article was telling its young readers to find other careers since, in the author's minds, students in agriculture are wasting their time trying to learn new ways of putting food on the table and clothes on the backs of billions of consumers.

My first question was, "Who wrote this article?" My mom quickly responded, "Someone who obviously has no idea where his or her food comes from or the technology that is required to keep their family fed."

I didn't understand. How could someone not know where their food comes from?

My mom explained to me that most of today's urban adults and children think their food comes from McDonald's or the grocery store and do not realize what type of education, work and effort it takes to provide a high-quality food supply. They have no idea the amount of science and technology involved in agriculture. Many believe that farming is for simple people and there is no need for a college education, so we are just wasting our time majoring in agriculture.

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It is mind-blowing to think that the public that demands three square meals a day could not understand how important education is in the production of our daily food supply.

We in agriculture seem very comfortable telling our side of the story among ourselves, and this is a great discussion to allow us to start a dialogue and understand the problem. However, this is only a start, and farmers and ranchers must reach out and tell their story in order to make the public aware of modern agriculture. We must continue to get our story to the consuming public to make them understand that education is a necessity in feeding a growing population with fewer farmers producing our food.

We need to get the word out that agriculture is a professional business that has become productive and advanced due to years of education and scientific research in the field. A great example of these technological advancements it to consider the market weight of a market steer 100 years ago.

In 1915, a steer's market weight was considerably lower than today's market animal, and it took as much as three years for these delicious steak makers to get to the stockyards. Today a steer can reach a much higher market weight of 1,250 pounds in an incredible year and a half (Agriscience Fundamentals). We can attribute all of the advancements in faster-growing and more efficient sources of protein to education and a willingness to adopt new research technology.

To further illustrate this point, in 1990 the U.S. average bushel per acre of corn was 118, but by 2015 the average skyrocketed to an astonishing 171 bushels per acre (agriscience fundamentals). These amazing agricultural achievements didn't happen by accident. It took a dedicated effort by some very smart people to increase productivity and efficiency.

Yet the public really doesn't realize or appreciate this change over time. Apparently they contend that young people like me and my peers are wasting their time studying agriculture in high school and college. They literally think that (pardon the pun) all of their needed food just grows on trees, and they don't need the next generation to push the envelope and redefine food production. They don't realize that education, technology, genetic engineering, and numerous other advancements play a large part in this progress, and are needed for survival of our civilization.

I know that the discussion we hear on the news today is that the progress and technology in agriculture can be very bad for the environment, animals and our health. Several groups in our population believe we should produce beef and other agricultural products the way it was produced centuries ago with horses, bib overalls and pitchforks.

Ladies and gentlemen, the fact of the matter is that we can't go back in time and farm like my great-great grandfathers. In 1862, the U.S. population was 31,000,000 with 58% being farmers. Today, the U.S. population is 275,000,000 with less than 2% farmers ("Growing A Nation"). The bottom line is we in agriculture must do more with less. We must show the public that our advancements in agriculture are essential in providing enough food for our future population. Science, technology and education are a must if we want to keep up with world demands.

Food Dialogues recently published that the average age of the American farmer is 58.3 years. When considering this statistic the question should easily arise "How are we going to feed the world without more people wanting careers in the farming industry?" Statistics show that our world population is going to be 9.7 billion by 2050; and it should be a serious concern the world will literally starve to death if we don't use every technological advancement at our disposal (World Population).

In order to feed this growing population it is going to take education, science, technology, and people that have a desire to become engaged in production agriculture. One of the only ways to get this important message out is to educate our public about food production in multiple ways.

One solution could be to develop agriculture education programs in every high school, junior high and elementary school across the nation. These courses are needed to communicate the real message about where our food comes from. This could easily be accomplished by adding agriculture science units to our already established science curriculums.

Instead of using zoo and companion animals to explain animal physiology, why not use livestock animals? When teaching plant science, why not use agronomy and correlate how plant production is essential to our food supply? If our education system designed a mandatory agriculture science-based program, that would get students involved in seeing the importance of advancements in agriculture at a young age. Kids would have a better understanding of the profession of ranching and farming.

"It is time to find a way to educate our entire population about where our food comes from and how important agriculture science, technology and advanced education are to a safe and stable food supply."

— Eric Schafer

Teaching young students specifically how cattle and other agriculture products are produced would help them see the light.

If the American Angus Association could develop specific cattle agriscience teaching material that could be integrated into all basic science courses throughout all grade levels across our nation, then students across America would get the same valuable information and have the true facts of where their food comes from. These lessons would also show how science, math, English, and other education areas are used every day in food production and prove that agriculture degrees are essential.

If the American Angus Association would become a loud voice on this incredible educational opportunity, it would not only be good for the agriculture business, but would also be educating the future generation correctly about food production. It is time to find a way to educate our entire population about where our food comes from and how important agriculture science, technology and advanced education are to a safe and stable food supply.

I am proud to have been born and raised on a grain and Angus farm and know the true importance of agriculture. Education, science and technology have been the keys to the advancement and success of our family farm. I know that my family feeds, clothes and fuels people worldwide, and that's something to be proud of. I have big dreams of going to college and majoring in agriculture. I am going to college to learn more about research, technology and how to feed the world. Agriculture: a useless degree? I think not!