



The Golden Rule

Showing cattle teaches youth core values.

Story & photos by Raney Lovorn, editorial intern

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you is The Golden Rule. As simple as it sounds, a defining moment comes with the realization that following this rule is a personal choice made regardless of the treatment received in return. For stock show kids, cattle provide priceless lessons about The Golden Rule and the importance of core values like mutual respect, kindness, fair play and hard work.

Memorizing and teaching The Golden Rule is easy. Living it is hard. Trying to show kids what it is like to truly care about others is sometimes difficult without also giving them a framework or context. When an animal's life is placed in a showman's hands, The Golden Rule suddenly has more resonance.

"I wish more downtown kids could see what it's like taking a bigger animal and having it respect you for the things you do for it," says Tim Mardesen, a newly elected National Junior Angus Board (NJAB) member from Iowa City, Iowa. "It's like The Golden Rule we're taught in kindergarten, where if you are going to treat someone with a rude or disrespectful attitude, they will probably give it back to you. Cattle are usually going to do the same thing; if you treat them kindly and respectfully, they will perform quite well for you."

Being a cattle handler has direct correlations with understanding how to treat people, Mardesen says. Cattle give kids a reason to wake up in the morning, a purpose for their actions, and provide an opportunity for them to see the results of their actions in real-life circumstances.

Skills learned

"Showing cattle is really more about life skills than anything; it teaches responsibility,

taking care of animals, and dedication to a certain aspect of your life,” says Casey Jentz, former NJAB member and current regional manager for the American Angus Association. “There are a lot of different things showing cattle can teach kids, and it is really a great way to raise a family.”

For Mardesen, a strong work ethic is a life skill associated with showing cattle. A combination of working jobs in manual labor and focusing his energy toward his show cattle projects taught Mardesen the importance of an attention to detail, even on seemingly small tasks.

Whether getting up early to feed, rinse the cattle before a hot day or blow-dry their hair, Mardesen says showing cattle taught him to prioritize the harder tasks in the beginning of the day so he could focus his energy before moving on to the more rewarding tasks associated with cattle in the afternoon. His work ethic and task-management style has been an asset in his college experience.

“It’s nice to have a strong work ethic in college; you know you’ve got to get to class, and you’ve got to get to work on time,” Mardesen says. “Studying hours: You’ve just got to shut up and do it, that’s all there is to it.”

Showing cattle not only affects the showman’s college work ethic, but their entire college and career experience, Jentz says. After being involved in the cattle business from a young age, he was ready to jump in when his opportunity came.

“Showing cattle formed where I was going to go to college and even what I was going

to major in,” Jentz says. “It really has led me throughout the different jobs I have had, and to where I am now with the American Angus Association as a regional manager.”

The correlation between showing cattle with the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and career success does not apply only to regional managers, cattlemen and industry professionals. Showing cattle provides opportunities for youths with a wide variety of interests.

“I think that showing cattle is going to help out my future with software and computer engineering, because cattle always want a systematic approach like the timing



PHOTO BY KASEY BROWN

► Mardesen credits the NJAA for developing his communications skills and teaching him how to relate to people regardless of their background.

of feeding, when they want to be washed in the morning,” Mardesen says. “Software and computer engineering deal with the same things, because everything has to be all typed up and in order, systematic and organized for everything to work smoothly.”

Along with preparing him for a career, Mardesen credits the NJAA for developing his communications skills and teaching

Future benefits

Small things are important in the livestock show experience. Both Mardesen and Jentz credit their parents for giving them the opportunity to be involved at a young age. In hindsight, they were grateful for a driving force in their success.

After growing up with Angus cattle, Jentz’s parents chose to raise their children in the NJAA because they wanted them to have the best opportunities available, Jentz says. As a new parent, Jentz has fresh perspective on his parents’ choices and hopes to raise his daughter in the NJAA, as well.

“Like every parent, you want every opportunity for your kid, and my parents were the same way,” Jentz says. “They really strived to let us — my brother, my sister and me — have every opportunity in the world to go out and do whatever we wanted. The NJAA is the greatest junior beef breed organization in the world, and I wouldn’t want my kid to have any less opportunity than that.”

Opportunities in the NJAA taught him a sense of dedication and how to give and receive encouragement. Jentz will carry his values and skills with him throughout his life thanks to peers and mentors in the NJAA.

“Mostly, it is a lot of encouragement from not only my Angus advisors, but everybody I have been involved with, whether it has been people I have worked for or people I have worked with, they all just gave me encouragement growing up,” Jentz says. “Whether it is your own family that you are born into or your Angus family that you grow into, those people are really important in your life.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION

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him how to relate to people regardless of their background. He says that national conferences and conventions like the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) provide a great environment for learning how to connect and communicate with new people.

“You learn to talk, just small talk with them about what they want to know, what they want to do, and their aspects of life,” Mardesen says. “That connection alone, just how to treat those people with what they are going through in those other areas could land you a job, just because you know how to chat with them. It’s the small things.”

