

# Heavy Hitters Mentor



► After mentors and protégés are paired, the Mentoring Mixer provides the teams an opportunity to socialize with other program participants.



► Alex Rogen (left), Brandon, S.D., introduces Lexi Knapp, Bloomfield, Iowa (right) to Angus Foundation President Milford Jenkins.



► Alex spends time with Lexi in the barn helping her fill out her NJAS Mentoring Booklet.

**NJAS Mentoring Program is an opportunity for junior Angus members to experience the NJAS to its fullest.**

*Story & photos by Kelli Fulkerson*

**A**s a child, there is no better way to feel part of an event than meeting and establishing new friendships. However, this can be a daunting task when you're at a national cattle show that has 700 exhibitors from 40 different states. Of course, there are the people you travel with, and sometimes people you may know from different states, but this just isn't enough.

The National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) recognized this issue and came up with a fun and exciting solution — the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) Mentoring Program. The program matches an NJAS rookie with an NJAS all-star.

In any mentoring relationship, there must be a mentor and a protégé. To qualify as a mentor, a junior must be at least 14 years of age and must have attended at least two previous shows. The mentor must also be able to commit to at least one check-in per day with his or her protégé.

A protégé can be any NJAA member who is a first- or second-year exhibitor at the NJAS.

## **Inspired to give back**

Alex Rogen of Brandon, S.D., has been attending the NJAS since 2001.

"I know what it's like to be that nervous junior member at your first NJAS," he says. Alex volunteered his time during the 2012 NJAS in Louisville, Ky., to become an NJAA mentor.

"I wanted to offer a younger junior member an opportunity to hang out with older NJAA members and not feel intimidated," Alex says. "I had one of the best mentors during my first NJAS in Denver, Colo., and I would love to be half the mentor that he was."

Alex said he wants to thank his mentor

# Future Players

Justin Brosey of Ohio for all the remarkable experiences that he shared with him throughout the years.

“All throughout the time that Justin was my mentor, I always thought, I want to be ‘that guy,’” says Alex.

During the 2012 NJAS Alex was partnered with Lexi Knapp, a first-year exhibitor. Lexi is the 9-year-old daughter of Brian and Karla Knapp, Bloomfield, Iowa. Lexi’s mom, Karla, encouraged her to become a part of the mentoring program as a way to meet new junior members and learn from a mentor.

“I didn’t really want to do it at first,” says Lexi. “Now that I have started the program, I am having fun. Alex is really nice, and he has been introducing me to everyone he knows.” Lexi was one of 117 junior members who participated in the mentorship program as a protégé.

“There is no better time than now to get youth involved in growth and leadership positions,” says Alex. “I hope that I offer this member an NJAS that they will never forget.”

## What the program entails

In order to teach any youth member true leadership, there needs to be an opportunity available for the junior to be held accountable. Accountability with the mentoring program comes into play by filling out the “NJAS Mentorship Program Booklet.”

This booklet provides a game plan for a weeklong scavenger hunt. Inside, the book offers areas for protégés to obtain signatures, with their mentor’s assistance, from the NJAA Board of Directors, several American Angus Association staff and regional managers. In addition to meeting these influential people in the Angus industry, mentors and protégés must meet other members from their states and learn fun facts about the many NJAS attendees, which they record in the booklet.

This structured networking offers an opportunity for junior members to create friendships that will last a lifetime.

“That is one of the best parts of the mentoring program — getting to meet so many different people,” says Alex. “Juniors now can reach out to not only each other,



► The NJAA encourages a mentoring mind-set while building friendships among Angus juniors. Here, former NJAA member Mandy Richardson, Louisa, Va., visits with Catherine Cowles, Rockfield, Ky., before Catherine enters the showing.

but industry professionals, breeders and Association staff.”

Robin Ruff, American Angus Association director of junior activities, notes, “This program is about expanding a junior member’s opportunities within this Association and industry. What better way

to do this than to offer the members of the program a chance to meet the people behind the breed.”

## Completion of the program

The only way that a member can complete

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► No matter what age, it’s always important to find a mentor you look up to. Pictured are Chase Thumel, Sheridan, Mo., and Jace Pipkin of Republic, Mo.



## IN A LEAGUE OF OUR OWN

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the mentoring program is to spend time with their mentor/protégé, complete the NJAS Mentorship Program Booklet and turn it into the show office at the end of the NJAS.

As each booklet is turned in, the mentor and protégé receive a special gift from the NJAA. Both the mentor and protégé can include this program to earn points on future NJAA award applications.

“We really hope that, as protégés, juniors have a great experience and want to come back and serve as mentors when they are old enough,” says Ruff.

Junior members are strongly encouraged to become mentors and protégés next year as the NJAS moves to Kansas City, Mo., where the theme will be, “Aberdeen in twenty-thirteen.”

If you wish to learn more about the mentoring program and the NJAA, please visit the website at [www.angus.org/NJAA](http://www.angus.org/NJAA).



**Editor's Note:** *Kelli Fulkerson is the editorial intern for Angus Productions Inc.*