

Running for the Board

Thirteen NJAA members compete for six spots on the Board.

Story & photos by **Abby White**

Look around the barn at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), and National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members of all ages can be found sitting on lawn chairs, showboxes and hay bales, playing cards and hanging out with their friends. Look closer and you might find that one member in a group is wearing a name tag, identifying them as a candidate — a candidate running for election to the NJAA Board of Directors.

These candidates spend many hours networking, trying to secure votes from state delegates. What it boils down to is a lot of hard work.

“Running is a job in itself,” Joe Epperly, candidate from Virginia, said, adding he was thankful he didn’t bring a good heifer. “I haven’t had a dull moment since I’ve been here. Taking care of my own stuff kind of takes a back seat.”

The candidates spend their time at the show talking to state delegates, other

junior members, advisors, parents and everyone in between. But for many, the quest for the green jacket begins months before the NJAS.

“In my state, we had a couple people who wanted to run — it was me and one of my really good friends,” Dana May, candidate from Wisconsin, said. “We talked about it for a while, and we both decided we didn’t want to hand it over and live with the ‘what if I would have’ mentality, so we had a run-off in our state.”

May said it was really hard, because she knew what a good job her friend would have done.

“I was really supportive of her, and if she would have won, I would have been 100% behind her,” May explained. “But, at the same time, I also really wanted to do it. There was a lot of turmoil.”

In Arkansas, junior members must follow the rules in the bylaws, which states that they must declare that they’re going to run at the spring meeting one year before the NJAS.

“It helps avoid conflicts with kids who are stacking up to run,” Allyson McGuire, candidate from Arkansas, explained. “So basically, I’ve been preparing for over a year for this, knowing that I was going to do it. If we have more than one kid wanting to run, we have an election. It works good for us having to do it a year before because it really gives kids time to see what it’s about.”

McGuire said her yearlong preparation entailed talking to her peers and other people around the state, letting them know that she was running for the Board. She also studied and worked on her résumé. Each candidate submits a letter, essay and résumé to the American Angus Association office. The materials are copied and mailed to all voting delegates prior to the NJAS.

Florida’s candidate, Roy Petteway, also had to decide to run a year in advance of the 2006 NJAS. “We haven’t had a candidate in six or seven years,” he said. “I was the only one who wanted to do it.”

► **Below:** Candidates Joe Epperly (left) and Clayton Lampe (right) work at the Angus Foundation booth. Candidates were required to work a few hours at the booth during the week.



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The deadline for each state to submit names for its candidate and delegates is June 15.

Why run?

Each candidate decided to run for the Board for different reasons. Some ran for self-respect and others ran to give back to the organization, but they all wanted the green jacket of an NJAA Board member.

“I’ve wanted to run for about five years now,” McGuire said. “Honestly, being in 4-H and junior Angus really changed me as a person. I used to be really shy, and when I started getting involved I had a lot more confidence. I’ve turned into the kind of person who likes to give back.”

Petteway’s reason for running did not involve a lifelong passion for wearing a green

jacket. “The reason I’m running is pride — the pride that I have knowing that I’m a member of this association,” he explained. “I’m proud that I’m showing the best breed in the world. I want to carry on the traditions.”

May, who is currently studying child psychology at the University of Wisconsin, thought she could bring a different perspective to the Board. She said she has always been passionate about Angus cattle and the cattle industry in general, but she didn’t think her career path was going to relate to that passion. In her mind, the youth involved in agriculture were the only ones involved on the Board, and she didn’t know if she would fit.

“But, I know there are other kids out there like that, and I wanted to be a role model for them,” she said. “I don’t want them to think that you can only participate in these things and be a leader if you’re going to go on and run a big Angus farm or go work for the Angus Association forever.”

Clayton Lampe, candidate from Kansas, decided he wanted to run for the NJAA Board at his first NJAS in 1993. “I’ve had a lot of friends get on, and I decided to run,” he said. “I looked up to them and would like to have others look up to me.”

Tips for running

May said being involved and active is the best training you can



► Josh Jackson, Kentucky candidate, works on his speech before speaking to NJAA voting delegates.

have to run for any office. McGuire agreed and said the youth who have gone to shows, been active in their state association and attended LEAD conferences are groomed to run for the Board.

“I think that’s why we’ve seen an increase in the number of kids running,” McGuire said. “Ten years down the line, there are going to be tons more qualified kids.”

Petteway added that to run for the Board, you have to be a people person.

“You have to be able to walk up to people and say, ‘Hi,’ even if you’re scared,” he said. “It



► **Above:** Candidates Dana May (left) and Allyson McGuire (right) help keep the shirts straight while working at the Angus Foundation booth.

► **Right:** Candidate Kara Wilson (right) talks with a voting delegate before the Candidate Delegate meeting.



doesn't matter if it's an 8-year-old kid or an 18-year-old kid; you have to show that you're the kind of person who will just walk up to them and see what their problems are."

McGuire said that she wants the delegates to feel comfortable and like she's approachable. "We need to be serious about certain things, but you want everyone to feel like you're approachable," she said.

May said that it's important for candidates to remember that they are not there to run for themselves. They are there to represent the NJAA. "If you're going to represent them, you'd better get to know them," she said.

Epperly said he knew candidates who ran in the past and spoke with several of them. "I sent my delegate packet to people who had been on before and it was very helpful," he said.

Follow the rules

Candidates can talk to whomever they want during the campaign process, but there are certain rules they have to follow.

"You can't give anything away," McGuire said. "You can have your picture in your display so people can find you, but you can't give letters or anything like that to the delegates."

That rule makes it important for the candidates to make their way around the barn and talk to delegates.

"The candidates are forced to go out," Petteway said. "That's why the delegates don't have name tags, so that we're forced to go out and shake hands and kiss babies with everybody."

The candidates enjoy getting to know juniors and their families at the NJAS.

"I have met more people in the last few days than I ever would have," McGuire said. "I had so much fun doing it, and that's part of the experience. If you didn't, once you got on the Board, you wouldn't know half of the people you do. It's really important to meet all the people."

The candidates also have to work a few hours in the Angus Foundation Silent Auction booth, selling T-shirts and other Angus paraphernalia.

Sizing up the competition

A lot of the candidates knew each other and were close friends before the NJAS. Others met just recently, but they all acknowledged the quality of candidates



► **Left:** Candidate Rebecca Tokach, North Dakota, competes in the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest. Candidates had to juggle running for the Board while competing in contests throughout the week.

► **Below:** Andrew Foster, Michigan candidate, practices his speech.



running. Teamwork among candidates was apparent.

"We've been helping each other a lot," McGuire said. "I think that's what's different about this year. Some people might advise not to do that, but we'd rather go introduce each other to delegates we know. It shows that we're team players, rather than everyone for themselves."

May and McGuire said all of the candidates bring something different to the table, which is what the Board needs.

"We have a representative for everything," McGuire said. "Some years, there hasn't been as much selection. I think from now on, there are going to be a lot of qualified candidates."

"A lot of us are good friends, and we'd love to see each other get on it together. But, at the same time, we're prepared if we don't."

Epperly also acknowledged that it was a difficult year to run for the Board.

"It's a really tough year," he said. "I wouldn't want to be a delegate."

The second time around

There is no limit to the number of times a junior member can run for the Board. This was Josh Jackson's second campaign.

"I ran last year and didn't quite make it," he said. "I was kind of down and out for a little bit, but I said, 'You know what, I'm not going to give up on this. I really want this; I'm going to try again next year.'"

Jackson said when he networks, he gets to know people one on one, which is how he can relate to them the most.

"It's important that when you're campaigning, you keep your head above water," Jackson said. He also competed in the quiz bowl and judging contests, and showed his cattle as well. "It makes it a little more challenging; you just have to monitor your time and balance everything."

Jackson said that this year is even more challenging, because he came so close last year.

"I just need to do a little bit better," he said. "I hope that it goes in my favor. We'll see what the big man has in store for me."

McGuire said it takes a lot of guts to run more than once. "I really admire the candidates who run again."

Candidate speeches and roundtable discussion

The evening of July 12, the candidates had the opportunity to showcase their speaking

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skills. The audience included all of the state delegates and some American Angus Association guests.

Each candidate gave a short speech about why they wanted to run for the Board and what qualities they possessed. Jake Tiedeman, current Board chairman, also asked the candidates to respond to two requests, which they answered for the audience. The first related to the industry: Name one technology that has advanced the cattle industry in the last five years, and explain how we, as Angus producers, have benefited from it. The second involved character: Describe your personal mission statement.

After each candidate gave their speech and answered questions, they had roundtable discussions with all of the voting delegates.

"I loved the roundtable discussion," Jackson said. "I got crazy questions and then the serious ones. I had one delegate ask me to explain BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy]. I also answered one about, 'If you were anything in a fridge, what would you be?' I told them milk, because I'm wholesome."

Jackson said the roundtable discussions make the evening more laid

back. It is also easier to talk to the delegates.

"You get to be loose," he said. "When you're up there behind the podium, you appear stuffy, but when you do the roundtable discussion, you have fun, which helps them relate and get to know you and therefore make a better decision."

Rebecca Tokach, candidate from North Dakota, was nervous about giving her speech, but after it was over, she said she felt really solid about it.

"I had a great time doing the roundtables," Tokach said. "It was a lot of fun and something you don't have to be very nervous about, like I thought I should have been."

Tokach was asked everything from serious questions, such as, "What is going on right now in the beef industry?" to funny questions, such as, "If you were a fruit, what kind of fruit would you be?"

The elections

In the afternoon of July 14, right before the awards ceremony, elections were held in the Our Land Pavilion. The candidates introduced themselves one last time before leaving the building so the delegates could vote. Each state could have two voting delegates who could vote for six candidates. The outgoing junior Board members and James Fisher, Association director of activities and junior activities, counted the votes. Delegates were asked to stay in the pavilion until all votes were counted, just in case of a tie and a need to revote.

Before the election, the candidates evaluated how they were doing.

"Right now, I feel pretty confident," Tokach said. "I feel like I've done everything I could do, and it will all sort out, and the best six candidates will be elected. It's been a great experience, and it is a great



► James Fisher, Association director of activities and junior activities, picks up a ballot from Indiana voting delegate Ashlyn Carter. Two delegates from each state were eligible to vote.

opportunity that a lot of kids don't get to have. It will help me later on in life because of the people I've met and the time I've put into it."

The big announcement

At the end of the NJAA awards program July 14, the six new members of the NJAA Board of Directors were announced: Justin Brosey, Ohio; Joe Epperly, Virginia; Andrew Foster, Michigan; Dana May, Wisconsin; Rebecca Tokach, North Dakota; and Kara Wilson, Indiana.

Obviously there were those who made the Board and those who didn't, but the candidates who were not elected remained in high spirits.

"It's a win-win for somebody who's running, even if you lose," Jackson said. "You get to meet a lot of different people and make a lot of friends, and that's something you can't take away."

Petteway reflected on his time spent campaigning and said the blisters on his feet were the worst part of the whole process. "The best part is the little kids who come up to you and recognize you," he said. "I spent hours playing Uno with 8-year-olds. It was fun and they said, 'Hey, Roy. Good luck tonight.' It was worth every minute."



► Allyson McGuire, candidate from Arkansas, speaks to NJAA members about why she would like to become a Board member.