

Wanted: New Members

Michigan and Texas junior associations enter Project of the Year contest.

Story & photos by **Abby White**

Even though there were only two entries in the Project of the Year contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), both exemplified the success member recruitment efforts can achieve. The judges said they wished there would have been more projects entered in the contest, but acknowledged that the two they evaluated were both excellent.

The Michigan Junior Angus Association won the contest; the Texas Junior Angus Association placed second.

Michigan's project

The Michigan Junior Angus Association has a relatively small number of members, especially considering how many Michigan youth participate in livestock events in the state.

"We'd see them at expo and preview shows," said Danielle Foster, Niles, who worked on the Michigan Junior Angus Association's Project of the Year from the start.

"We decided that we needed to get these kids involved," she said. "Indianapolis is only a three- to four-hour drive, maybe five for some, and we knew we could have quite the turnout at junior nationals."

This inspired the Michigan Junior Angus Association to start recruiting. They invited potential members to meetings and had workshops. They knew it would be challenging, so they helped each other recruit. In the end, the project was successful.

"We had more juniors come to junior nationals, our meetings were much larger, and we have many contest participants this year," Foster said. "We're happy with the turnout."

Foster said the main reason they chose recruitment as their Project of the Year is so the junior association could continue to thrive.

"We have a great group and we decided that since we're going to be leaving in a few years, we need younger members to keep it going," she said. "Younger members want older members to spend time with them. We were definitely successful."

Foster worked with fellow Michigan junior Erika Boehmer, Charlotte, to put the project's information on a display board and include brochures.

"We worked on it for five days," Foster said. "Kinko's and the computer were our best friends."

Foster said that she wished there would have been more entries.

"Every state does something," she said. "They should share it."

Texas's project

The Texas Junior Angus Association also saw a need to get more of the youth who were already showing Angus involved in the association. They used T-shirts to lure new members to their meeting in January at Fort Worth.

"We had T-shirts made for opening ceremonies at last year's NJAS," Kevin Gleason, Midlothian, Texas, who coordinated the state's Project of the Year, explained. "We found out a lot of people liked them and wanted to buy them. So, we decided that all new members who paid their \$10 fee would get a free T-shirt."

Since there are many youth who show Angus cattle at the Fort Worth Stock Show, the Texas Junior Angus Association members passed out vouchers when they checked in cattle. The voucher explained that if they came to the meeting and became a member, they would receive a free Texas Hold 'Em T-shirt. The Texas Junior Association gained 27 new members from that meeting.

"It was one of the biggest meetings we've ever had," Gleason explained. "They actually got to see what we're doing and what we're all about."

Gleason also realized they could sell the T-shirts to people who didn't show Angus cattle.

"People who showed other breeds wanted our T-shirt, too," Gleason said. "So, we started selling shirts for \$15 a piece, which was a \$5-per-shirt profit."

For the members who joined, the shirt was free, and the Texas Junior Angus Association wasn't losing money if they gave away free shirts, since the membership fee was \$10. The profit made from the shirts they sold went back to the association.



► **Above:** Sandy Trosper, Auxiliary member, Anne Lampe, Kansas Angus Association secretary, and Al DeClerk, Association Board member, judge the Project of the Year contest at the NJAS.



► **Right:** Al DeClerk, Association Board member, writes comments while judging the Project of the Year contest.

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► **Above:** Michigan Junior Angus Association member Danielle Foster developed the display and brochures for the Michigan Project of the Year.

► **Right:** The Michigan Junior Angus Association saw a need for more members and developed a recruitment plan. Their project won the contest.

► **Below:** The Michigan Junior Angus Association won the Project of the Year contest.



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“The focus wasn’t for fundraising,” Gleason explained. “It was just an added bonus.”

Kerri Gleason, Kevin’s mom, said that one of the reasons they focused on recruitment was because of the state’s geographic challenges.

“Texas is just so big,” she said. “It’s so hard to get members from every area, so that’s what we focused on.”

The project was successful, as five new members attended the NJAS and also participated in the contests. The Texas Junior Angus Association filled all of their teams and was glad to have the new members.

Gleason put the poster and brochures together for the Project of the Year display. He started two weeks before the NJAS and spent 12 hours putting it together, with the help of other members who provided pictures.

Judging the projects

Judging the Projects of the Year were Al DeClerk, American Angus Association Board member; Anne Lampe, Kansas Angus Association secretary; and Sandy Trosper, American Angus Auxiliary member. They agreed both projects were excellent and judged on a variety of criteria.

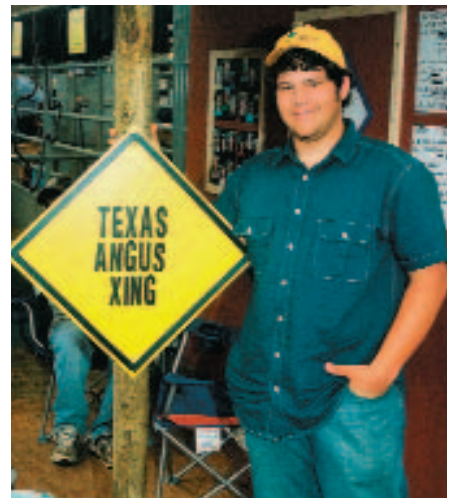
“My focus was on the effectiveness of the project,” Trosper said. “If you don’t have an end result, you have to go back to the drawing board and come up with something different. Also, the display has to be attractive and eye-catching.”

Lampe said both junior associations did very well, and it was important that the junior members carried out the project.

“I like to see the projects involve all members — not just one or two, not the advisors and not the adults,” Lampe said.

The judges realized that taking on a project is a big responsibility. They hoped members from other states would see the projects and be inspired.

“I think that both of these ideas address an ongoing concern,” DeClerk explained. “You have to move the kids through the system, pick up new ones and train the leadership to keep members involved. Both of these projects were really worthwhile.”



► **Above:** Texas Junior Angus Association member Kevin Gleason developed the display and brochures for the organization’s Project of the Year.



► **Left:** The Texas Junior Angus Association used T-shirts as a recruitment tool to get new members. Their project placed second in the contest.



► **Below:** The Texas Junior Angus Association won second place in the Project of the Year contest.



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