

Students Helping Students

Angus junior involved in scholarship endowment by student group.

by **Kasey Miller**, associate editor

The Angus family provides many scholarship opportunities for its junior members. In fact, the Angus Foundation awards more than \$220,000 in scholarships each summer, and the Angus Auxiliary focuses on youth development through scholarships.

Others in the Angus family are creating opportunities for youth, too, and in creative ways. Scholarship endowments are a popular way to create scholarships for students far into the future. One recently announced scholarship endowment was created by students (led by an Angus junior) for students.

Scholarship endowment

It is rare for students to give scholarships, much less endow one, yet that is exactly what students on the Texas A&M University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (COALS) Council have done. The effort was led by Council President Mollie Lastovica, an Angus junior from Fredericksburg, Texas, majoring in agricultural communications and journalism. Lastovica and four other council leaders signed documents Nov. 5 to finalize the endowment's creation. The five are officers of the council, which represents the college's 7,265 students.

To become endowed, a scholarship must be funded with at least \$25,000. That is why endowments are usually made by people later in life and why a student-created endowment is so out of the ordinary.

The council funded the endowment from an account derived from its Agriculture Career Exposition, a career fair in which employers pay for exhibit space to meet students who could be potential employees. The event was previously hosted in a location on campus that was more costly.

With the recent opening of the agriculture headquarters on campus, a new and less costly venue for the event was available, and the council's financial account grew, says Lastovica.

"Dr. [Chris] Skaggs, our advisor, encouraged us to consider ways to use the funds rather than have [them] sit unused in an account," says Lastovica, "so the officers got together over the summer and brainstormed about possible uses."

Skaggs, the college's associate dean, says the idea for a scholarship came entirely from the students and was supported unanimously by the 57-member council when presented at the group's first meeting earlier this semester.

"The students recognized the significant



► COALS Council President Mollie Lastovica signs the documents creating the endowed scholarship as College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean Mark Hussey (far left) and Texas A&M University President R. Bowen Loftin (right) look on.

impact of scholarships on their own lives and wanted to give back to future students in the college," says Skaggs.

"We hope that the younger members and future members of the council will continue to use the discretionary funds toward the scholarship to make more and bigger awards," Lastovica says.

Angus roots

Lastovica has been a member of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) since 2001, when she started showing Angus heifers. She and her family showed mostly in the state of Texas, but she attended her first National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in 2003.



► Student leaders signed documents Nov. 5 to create the Texas A&M University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Council Endowed Scholarship for future students. Pictured are (from left) Chris Skaggs, associate dean; Sydney Reece; Whitley James; Justin Benavidez; Mollie Lastovica; Mark Hussey, dean; Stefan Tucker; Deanna Bosse; Katie Muehlstein; and Alyssa Spruill.

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Her parents encouraged her and her brother to participate in the educational and leadership opportunities offered through the NJAA. She says she competed in team sales and quiz bowl on the national level, and was part of the winning intermediate division quiz bowl team in 2007.

Additionally, she attended the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference from 2004-2010, excluding 2007. She was a voting delegate for the state of Texas at the NJAS, a reporter for *The Scoop* and earned her Bronze and Silver awards through the NJAA's National Junior Recognition Program. In 2010 she competed as one of five Miss American Angus contestants.

"College has slowed down my NJAA involvement, but I am still an advocate for the organization and give credit to my Angus experiences for many of the accomplishments I have seen in my life thus far," she explains. "NJAA exposed me to the world of agriculture and Angus cattle outside of my home state and allowed me to make lifelong friends, who I will forever treasure."

Her NJAA, 4-H and FFA experiences also shaped her career choice by instilling in her a passion for agriculture and the beef industry. She fostered her interest in journalism through high school involvement in yearbook production and involvement with her school's journalism department.

"Without my NJAA experiences, such as attending NJAS and LEAD conferences, I do not think that I would have come to love the agricultural industry as much as I do today. I truly believe that my experiences correlate directly to my decision of majoring in agricultural communications and journalism," she notes.

These Angus roots led to her involvement in COALS Council in college. In fall 2010, she started her freshman year having just retired her title as Texas 4-H Council president. The mission and values of the COALS Council were in line with her personal beliefs, and she was selected as one of the 10 freshman/transfer members that fall. By taking advantage of the opportunities through COALS Council, like she did through NJAA, she quickly rose through the ranks of leadership.

Team effort

Lastovica is quick to acknowledge that the endowment was a group effort.

"I am beyond thrilled that I have been able to serve in the top position this year as we establish the COALS Council Endowment," she says. "However, I know that this outstanding accomplishment would not have been possible without Council members and

officers who came before us and the Council that I lead today.

"Establishing the COALS Council Endowment has been a result of the collaborative efforts of passionate student leaders who wish to serve this university selflessly. The lessons of humility, time management, dedication, unity, diversity, service and loyalty have all been instilled in me through this organization, and I cannot imagine my college experience having not been involved in COALS Council."

As the NJAA gives many opportunities to its 6,000 members, it also instills the desire to

serve others in the agricultural community and beyond.

Says Lastovica, "I know that, regardless of what position I hold in the future, my passion of agriculture and journalism will continue to drive my career decisions, and I hope to serve as a champion of beef producers by using my knowledge and love for media to eliminate the gap between agricultural producers and consumers."



Editor's Note: A news release by Kathleen Phillips, Texas AgriLife Communications, contributed to this story.