



# A Passion for Angus

Hard work and a grateful attitude help fuel this Idaho junior's Angus and industry passion.

Story by **Kim Holt**; photos by **Julie Kerner**

**F**rom one visit with energetic 19-year-old Shane Kerner, you'll find out that she's a proud ranch kid from rural America who is as comfortable in a pair of boots as she is in high heels. It also won't take you long to find out that this college sophomore, who was born and raised in southwest Idaho's Weiser River Valley, is passionate about the Angus breed as well as the beef industry.

"I've always been drawn to the Angus in our herd," she says. "I wanted to be a part of something that was always the best."

Shane's start in the purebred business began a little differently than most her age, but it has given her a unique, real-world perspective. Her dad, Bruce, is from a commercial background, while her mom, Julie, was raised with registered Herefords

and served as a National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) director from 1978-81.

In the late 1980s, Shane's parents started from scratch a 3,000-head custom feedlot. Today, the Kerner family's cattle enterprise covers the industry gamut. It includes their custom feedlot operation, yearlings, the family's commercial herd and registered Angus owned by Shane and registered Herefords owned by her sister, Dana.

Shane's mom recalls that her daughter's first days out of the house as an infant were to the feedlot instead of the pasture. Her dad says that Shane started checking and gathering cattle when she was 8, and she eventually started riding pens with him not long after. For some four years, Shane and Dana have been riding pens on their own, often stepping in on weekends to rotate the workload with employees.

Shane signed up for 4-H as soon as she was eligible, exhibiting Angus steers. It wasn't until she was in eighth grade that she bought her first registered Angus heifer. That was when she "found her love" and figured out she really wanted to do something more with this project.

"We've always told our kids, 'Find your passion, and if we can help you, we'll help,'" Bruce says. "But you can't go through life



► All three Kerner siblings, including sister Dana and brother Sam, work together at Kerner Cattle Co. Dana raises Herefords, and she and Shane formed K-Sis Cattle Co. in summer 2011. "We have worked together to breed, raise and sell our cattle. It's really fun to get to share our passion of raising and showing cattle together, even if she does have her colors mixed up," Shane jests.

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without some kind of passion that drives you. Obviously, Shane's is Angus cattle."

### Real-world experiences

Her registered herd now numbers more than 20 head, built through her own means, including savings from project steers and, as a junior in high school, grass calves, initially purchased through a Farm Service Agency (FSA) student loan.

Her grass-calf project is what "really got her purebred herd rolling," Shane remarks. "Once I made a profit, I rolled this over to purchase more Angus cattle."

This project also helped teach her about another industry segment. The cattle were hers and branded as such. She watched markets for when to buy and sell and found and rented pasture.

"I learned a ton from it," she comments. "I always watched the DTN with Dad, but never took it to heart until I had it actually affecting me."

Catching a calf in a local PRCA rodeo calf scramble also assisted Shane's registered foundation. Since about age 13, she has worked at the family's feedlot as a paid employee, learning the value of good work habits.

Julie explains that work Shane carries out on their ranch's cattle at the feedlot goes toward her feed bill; all work she does on custom cattle, however, is considered day labor.

Julie, who writes all Kerner Cattle Co. paychecks, told Shane: "We're going to pay you like we pay somebody else, so if you don't work very well, you're not going to get paid very well." That's always been incentive enough to get a job done well, she says.

### Defining moments

Shane's cattle background may be more diversified than some junior members', but she wouldn't trade her experiences.

"I don't ever want to take them for granted. I'm trying to use all the sources I have because a lot of kids don't get that experience," she says.

"I think if I would have been raised just commercial, I wouldn't realize how important both commercial and purebred sides are — they complement one another. I'm literally right in the middle of both of them."

She says her focus is toward genetics and breeding, however, with her program recently turning out a stout CC&7 yearling from a previously successful show heifer. Her parents actually purchased this registered bull for their commercial herd, so "now I can really



► Ranch work is far from foreign for Shane Kerner, who has grown up working alongside her family in the industry.

see what he does," Shane remarks, especially since they own a feedlot.

Last year she sold two bulls to neighbors, and she still has local ranchers calling her for Angus bulls. "It's an honor to have our cattlemen from around [here] wanting to know if they can do business with me now. That's definitely a big accomplishment for me," she adds.

Another defining moment in Shane's junior livestock career was in 2011 when she was recognized as the Idaho FFA's Star State Farmer. It was an honor she never expected.

"Her goal was her cattle, building her herd," her dad says. "The Star State Farmer was just the reward she got for doing that."

He adds, "We didn't do it for her; she did it herself. With Shane owning her own cattle, she has learned how to work and realized that without that work there's no reward."

Shane adds, "It was such an honor to receive for the state of Idaho. I knew I was going to make a business out of it, but [the award] wasn't my main drive. I had that spark when I was little in 4-H. Something inside said I really want to keep going because this is something I love."

Her friends were into sports, but Shane says, "My passion was with cattle."

Her participation in state, regional and national junior Angus associations and activities has helped further fuel her Angus passion and given it shape, but it wasn't

without challenges.

After joining the Idaho Junior Angus Association in 2007, Shane recalls being "overwhelmed" her first year as a junior member.

"I never thought of ever going out and washing cattle every day. I didn't know anything other than 4-H. All the time and commitment that goes into it — I realized what a big deal it was.

"I looked up to the older members and the officers — the green coats. I have always been leadership-driven and, once I saw who they were, how they acted, what they had going for them, and all the opportunities they had to travel, meet people, and for potential careers, the more I got involved and knew 'this is what I want to do. I want to be one of them.'

"As I got older and more involved, I never thought I would be where I am today. Nearly everything I do, if it's with cattle or not, I can truly say that being a part of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and Angus breed has really shaped me. I really have a good idea of what I want to do, what I want to be and who I am now."

In five short years, Shane has represented both the Idaho Angus

and Western States Angus Associations as queen, and served in numerous office and leadership roles within these two groups' junior associations.

"Serving as the Idaho Angus Queen was a great way to strengthen my speaking skills and knowledge of the Angus industry and be more involved at shows," she says.

A year later, being crowned the Western States Angus Queen at the Western National Angus Futurity in Reno, Nev., was one of her favorite Angus memories and greatest accomplishments.

"It was such an honor to represent the western states on a state, regional and national level. My year as Miss Western States served as a stepping-stone for leadership positions, as well as connections across the nation for a potential career.

"Being an active member of the NJAA has taught me many life lessons that have molded me into the person I am today. Attending the LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) conference, National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and other various shows has enabled me to become more outgoing, a better leader and has strengthened life skills that I can apply both in and out of the showing (see "Grassroots reflections")."

Graduating from high school in 2011, Shane received 12 major scholarships, two of which were the Angus Foundation Jean Ann (Neumeyer) Bojorquez Memorial Angus

Scholarship and the Angus Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship, presented during the 2011 NJAS in Pennsylvania.

She recalls that award presentation as another defining moment.

“It was such an honor to be selected with the rest of those kids from the Midwest

and other states that excel in purebred production,” she says. “It was one of those moments where I thought, ‘I’m really here now.’”

### Future plans

Shane plans to finish her sophomore

year at the University of Idaho and then attend Kansas State University her junior year through the National Student Exchange program, before transferring for her senior year.

“My ultimate goal academic-wise is

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## Grassroots reflections

From a grassroots-member perspective, Shane shares her reflections on the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and its opportunities, the importance of her work experiences at Kerner Cattle Co., lessons learned from her parents and her way of giving back.

### NJAA opportunities

I think a lot of the time we get so caught up in the hard work that goes into doing well at shows, we often forget about all the opportunities that the NJAA has to offer without cattle. I’ve learned that one doesn’t have to take cattle to a show to be involved and compete. There are plenty of opportunities that I think juniors should take advantage of, even if they’re not on the end of a halter.

Traveling to shows such as Denver, Louisville or nationals, there are always life experiences to take home. National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) contests like the quiz bowl, team sales, team fitting, public speaking, the Auxiliary-sponsored *Certified Angus Bee*® (CAB®) Cook-Off, judging contests and fitting clinics can really help juniors strengthen skills that benefit one both academically, socially and personally.

Some of my favorite national contests are the CAB Cook-Off, team sales and team fitting. Another NJAS contest that has benefited my college experience is the Career Development Contest. This business interview setting helps juniors prepare for a real job interview. Sending in a résumé, preparing a job description and going through the interview process made it easier to go through job interviews and important meetings in college. It is contests like this that focus on personal success outside of the Angus industry that make the NJAA something special.

Another one of my favorite Angus activities is attending the LEAD Conference. Going to LEAD has enabled me to travel to some really cool places and make friendships that will last forever. It’s such a fun experience to interact with other juniors without the intensity of the showing. I’ve made some great friends and unforgettable memories. Visiting other ranches and the workshops are such an eye-opener of how the Angus industry impacts society on many different levels.

### Work at Kerner Cattle Co.

I feel truly blessed to have grown up with all the resources covering nearly every aspect of the cattle industry. From a young age, I’ve been helping my family manage our commercial herd and custom feedlot operation. Whether it is tasks such as loading and unloading cattle from trucks, processing, sorting, weighing, riding pens and special care to cattle, moving herds from pasture to pasture or irrigating, fixing fence and other maintenance jobs, I wouldn’t want to grow up any other way.

Because of this, I’ve gained a perspective from the time the calves hit the ground to being shipped off to harvest. I’ve gained knowledge of the cattle industry that is important to continue and

expand my career. With this I have also formed a deep passion for Angus cattle that fuels my goals, ability to overcome challenges and the desire to maintain my own business well into the future.

I’ve learned through raising my own herd that it’s not all about bringing home the purple. The bigger picture is to build a strong foundation herd to benefit my future.

### Important lessons taught by my parents

My parents have raised me with a strong work ethic, appreciation for my surroundings and respect for others. Through everyday experiences on our ranch, I have developed important skills such as time management, communication and the importance of financing. I can apply these skills not only to my Angus herd, but in the real world, as well.

I’ve learned that with hard work come great accomplishments, but also challenges along the way. Sticking to the “Code of the West” and not giving up not only builds character, but discipline, determination and integrity. The life of a rancher isn’t easy or glamorous, but my parents have taught me to do the best with what you have, never give up on your goals, learn from your mistakes and keep following your passion.

I continuously look up to my parents for their advice, wisdom and help through some of my biggest challenges. I know that they are always there to support me. I couldn’t ask for two more important, successful and encouraging people to look up to. I can’t thank them enough for all they’ve done for me. I wouldn’t be where I am today if it

weren’t for the endless support and love they provide to our family.

### Importance of giving back

Last summer our small town lost a kind, loving and active high school girl due to a tragic car accident. Sloane Weldon was a good friend of mine who was truly a joy to be around. Growing up on a small purebred Angus operation, her Christmas present that year was a first-calf heifer from her father. Unfortunately, Sloane’s time had passed before she was able to raise and continue breeding her heifer.

That year at our county fair, the Weldon family established a 4-H scholarship in Sloane’s name from the proceeds of the heifer’s sale. After growing up with Sloane in 4-H, on the cheerleading squad and sharing high school memories together, I felt it was my place to buy her heifer. I’ll never forget the emotion that our whole county shared as her heifer sold in the ring.

Sloane’s heifer serves a special place in my herd. Instead of keeping the offspring from Sloane’s heifer to add to my herd, I plan to donate her calves back to a 4-H member who wants to get started with a beef cattle project. This is a great way to keep Sloane’s name, as well as her scholarship endowment, continuing throughout the years. I think it will also be a great way to help younger kids get started with a registered Angus project and just one way that I can give back to our community.

— by **Shane Kerner**



► Being crowned Western States Angus Queen is one of Shane Kerner’s favorite memories and greatest accomplishments. She remarks, “Finding my passion through Angus cattle is such a huge part of my life and has taught me many valuable lessons.”

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to graduate from Kansas State University," she relays. Currently she is an animal science/business major with an agricultural communications/public relations (PR) minor. PR is one of her interests, and she hopes to intern in order to gain insight into careers that can combine people and cattle.

She also isn't counting out consumer education as a career choice.

"At the University of Idaho, I lived with 80 sorority sisters and maybe two knew what a cow was," she relays. "That was a big eye-opener for me. That was incentive for me to say, 'OK, here's what I'm going to teach you.' It was really cool to share my knowledge and experiences with people who have no idea about the cattle industry."

If she gets the chance to run for the NJAA Board, "I'm definitely going to take that opportunity," she assures. She also plans to consider the NJAA Ambassador program,

newly created and designed to recognize one outstanding junior Angus member who, nationally and internationally, will support the production of the Angus breed and the consumption of Angus beef.

"You only get to age 21, so you've really got to work all those years to make it come together, which is where I am right now," she comments.

Shane adds, "When you're first starting out, I don't think you really realize how much you have because you're a state and national junior Angus member and are involved in all of these activities. My first year of college, being away from it and coming back, every little thing means so much to me now. It's awesome to get to see what I have because of my membership and these experiences."



► The Angus Foundation awarded \$210,000 in scholarships to junior Angus members in 2011. Shane Kerner (pictured third from left) was the beneficiary of two awards.