

Story of a Heifer

VanderSloots of Riverbend Ranch help California juniors host, attend NJAS.

by Abby White

At the Signature Collection Sale June 24 at Wilton, Calif., Steve Harrison, director of customer services for Riverbend Ranch, purchased a Riverbend Rita 3047 daughter of Bon-View New Design 1407. While this seems normal, the sale has an interesting twist. The heifer calf was originally donated by Riverbend Ranch, Idaho Falls, Idaho, to the California Junior Angus Association (CJAA) as a confirmed heifer pregnancy. They bought her back.

One would think that donating the calf in the first place would have been enough support, but Riverbend owners Frank and Belinda VanderSloot wanted to do more.

"There were two main reasons for us doing it," David Brown, general manager of Riverbend, says. "We wanted to help the juniors. We feel these youth programs are really important for the continuance and longevity of the beef industry. Secondly, we knew the genetics extremely well and wanted them back."

It all started in 2005 when the CJAA realized it needed to raise money to help host the 2005 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). With the

assistance of Abbie Nelson of Five Star Land and Livestock, Brown was contacted to see if Riverbend could help.

Riverbend said they wanted to be part of the fundraising efforts, and Brown told Nelson he wanted to wait for the perfect thing.

Brown's perfect thing was a donation to the CJAA in the form of a confirmed heifer pregnancy in a recipient Simmental-Angus cow. He wanted to help market it and made sure the CJAA would help market it, too.

The pregnancy was sold at the 2005 Western National Angus Futurity in Reno, Nev., for \$9,000. Nine California Angus breeders purchased the pregnancy, and the pregnant recipient cow was delivered to the Five Star ranch in Wilton. In February she delivered a "very nice" heifer calf, Nelson reports.

The second time around

It just so happened that the CJAA desperately needed some money, Nelson explains. So the California breeders put the heifer in the Signature Collection Sale as a donation. The sale manager didn't take any commission, and the auctioneer helped as well.

"The night before our sale, Steve Harrison (of Riverbend) was at the pre-sale party," Nelson says, adding that she thought he was just there to show support. But, at the end of the

sale, Riverbend bought the heifer for \$14,000. With the recipient cow, flush, added semen, feed and mineral, the total cost was \$16,200, making the VanderSloot's total contribution to the CJAA more than \$25,000.

Additional donations — in the form of an artificial insemination (AI) certificate, semen straws, feed, mineral and a flush — came from Oak Ridge Angus; G13 Angus Ranch; Genex Cooperative Inc.; Jake Parnell, Nutrena; Kris Gudel, Cargill; and Larry Lanzon, Lander Vet.

"Everyone wants to help the kids, especially kids they know are involved in a positive program with responsibilities," Nelson says.

The CJAA members sent a plaque to the VanderSloots to thank them for their support.

"It's just awesome," Nelson says.

The generosity of the VanderSloots helped the CJAA members host the 2005 NJAS and attend the 2006 NJAS.

"We're focused on wanting to help the youth," Brown says. "We think the Angus youth are extremely important to the future of not only the Angus breed, but also the beef industry. Any time we can help out the youth, or the juniors, we're certainly going to help out and try to do it."

The heifer is now back at Riverbend Ranch.

More donations

The VanderSloots also donated the 2007 Angus Foundation Heifer,



Riverbend Rita R125, who will sell at 2 p.m., on Jan. 11, 2007, during the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo. See page 64 in this issue for more details.

"We're big believers in the Angus Foundation," Brown explains. "We wanted to do our part to support it. It's more than a donation for us. It means a lot to us on a personal level to be selected to donate. We think it's a huge honor."

The VanderSloots have 14 children and are obviously family-oriented.

"They're extremely interested in helping other youth," Brown says. "Young people are extremely important to them. That's the real driving force behind Riverbend Ranch."

Brown said Frank really wanted to give his children a good place to grow up, and thought there was probably no finer environment than the ranching business.

Besides helping Angus juniors, Frank also supports approximately a dozen 4-H livestock sales every year.

Says Brown, "It sure points true to his dedication to help young people."



► Frank and Belinda VanderSloot of Riverbend Ranch, Idaho Falls, Idaho, have 14 children and are dedicated to helping youth in the CJAA and the NJAA.

► **Above:** These people helped make more than \$25,000 available to the CJAA to help host the 2005 NJAS and attend the 2006 NJAS. Pictured are (front row, from left) Mike Hall, Cal Poly, host; Cheryl LaFranchi Mongini, host and coordinator; Manual Casillas, CJAA member; Darrell Silveira, Silveira Bros., host; Abbie Nelson, Five Star Land and Livestock, host; Steve Harrison, Riverbend Ranch, heifer buyer; Martin Machado, buyer; Ty Byrd, Byrd Cattle Co., supporter; Cassie Silveira, California Junior Angus Queen; Ryan Nelson, Five Star Land and Livestock, immediate past president of CJAA; (back row, from left) Jake Parnell, Nutrena, mineral donor; Casey Cooley, CJAA co-advisor; Kris Gudel, Cargill, feed donor; Randy Beemer, buyer; Lucas Cozzitorto, CJAA member; Brandon Machado, CJAA member; Britney Machado, CJAA member; Bill Traylor, Genex, semen donor; and Garrett Blanchard, Silveira Bros., CJAA reporter.