



# Angus Idol



Talent search winners perform during the NJAS opening ceremony.

by *Chelsea Good*

**T**he National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) started off on the right note, with three talent search winners sharing their musical abilities during opening ceremonies.

“I couldn’t think of a better way to kick off the week,” talent search committee chair Gaye Pfeiffer of Mulhall, Okla., says. When planning for the opening ceremonies, the committee wanted to do something special to fit with the American Dream theme. *American Idol* quickly came to mind. The committee decided to have its own talent contest — Angus style.

National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members from eight states submitted tapes showcasing their talents. Three members were selected to perform during the opening ceremonies.

## John Williams

John Williams of Paragould, Ark., played the fiddle. The 12-year-old has taken classical violin and fiddle lessons for two years.

“I thought it’d be cool to play in front of all those people and get a lot of applause,” says Williams, who had already played in front of a crowd of close to 100 people.

“I knew this was going to be a whole lot bigger than that,” he says. “Before I played I was really nervous because there were thousands of people. But I didn’t mess up. I got more applause than I expected, and some people even said I got a standing ovation.”

## Taylor Gazda

Taylor Gazda, 14, was also excited to sing in front of the large crowd. Growing up in Athens, Ga., Gazda realized her passion for music in elementary school.

“My teacher played a song on the piano at school,” Taylor says. “I went home and played the song and sang.” That’s when she told her parents singing is something she wants to do. She said that not everyone understood. Music doesn’t seem to fit with showing cattle for most, but it does for her.

“Showing cows has always been one of the most important things to me, and singing is right up there,” Gazda says. “I’m excited to combine the two.”

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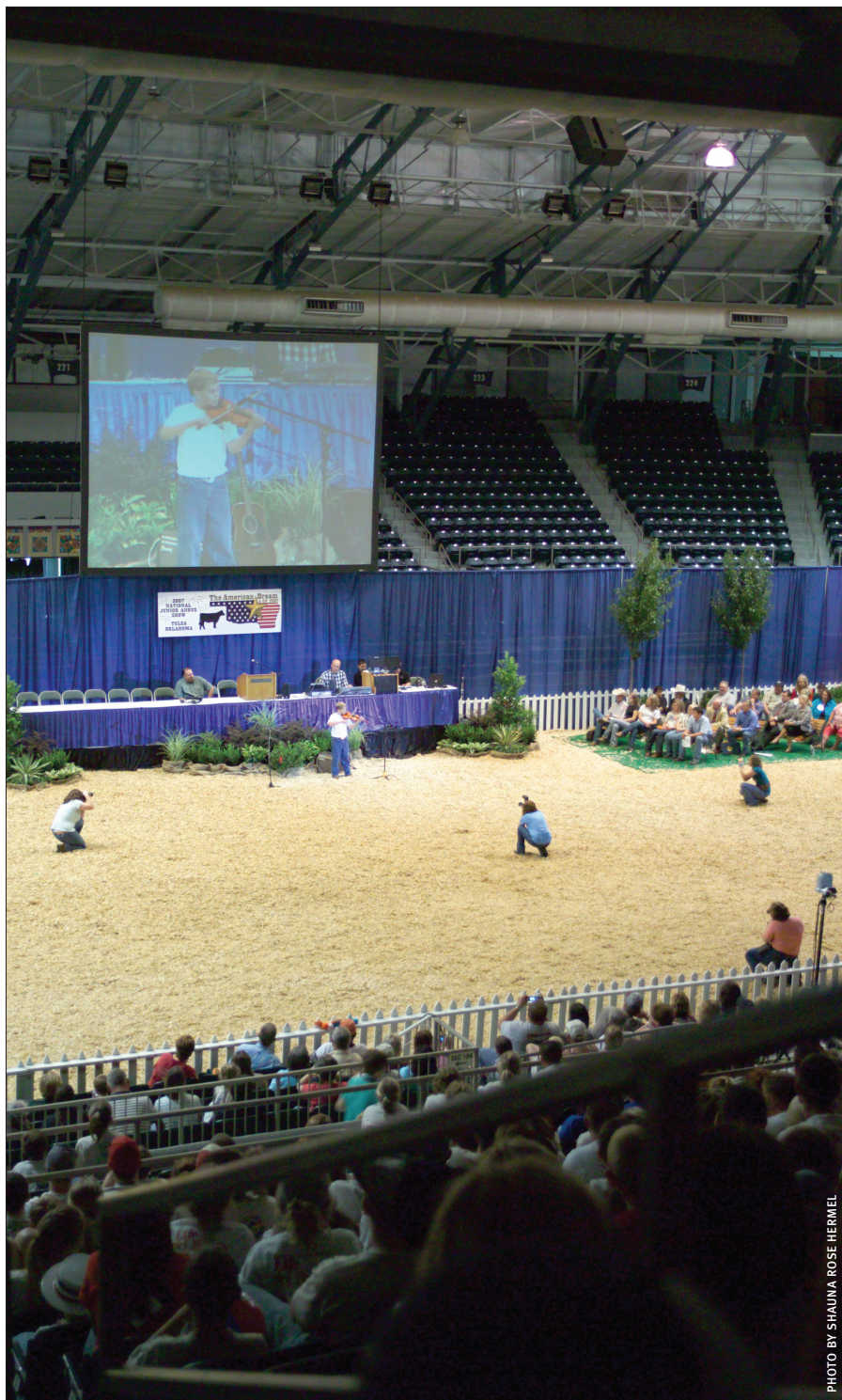


PHOTO BY SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL

► John Williams of Paragould, Ark., started the National Junior Angus Show off on the right note by playing the fiddle at the beginning of opening ceremonies.

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Gazda says she'd always wanted to perform at opening ceremonies. She aspired to open the NJAS by singing the National Anthem. She never dreamed she'd have the opportunity to sing the song of her choice, which was "Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield.

When her dad told her about the

competition, she was talking on the phone. She was so excited she had to hang up with her friend.

### Kevin Gleason

Kevin Gleason of Midlothian, Texas, found out about the talent search through the *Texas Angus Newsletter*. The 18-year-old

has played the guitar and written songs since his freshman year in high school, so he applied.

To close Monday night's opening ceremonies, Gleason played his guitar and sang his original song "Angels and Rodeo Clowns." He says he was more nervous than he thought he'd be before he performed, mostly because he knew so many people in the crowd. After he was finished, more people knew who Gleason was than before.

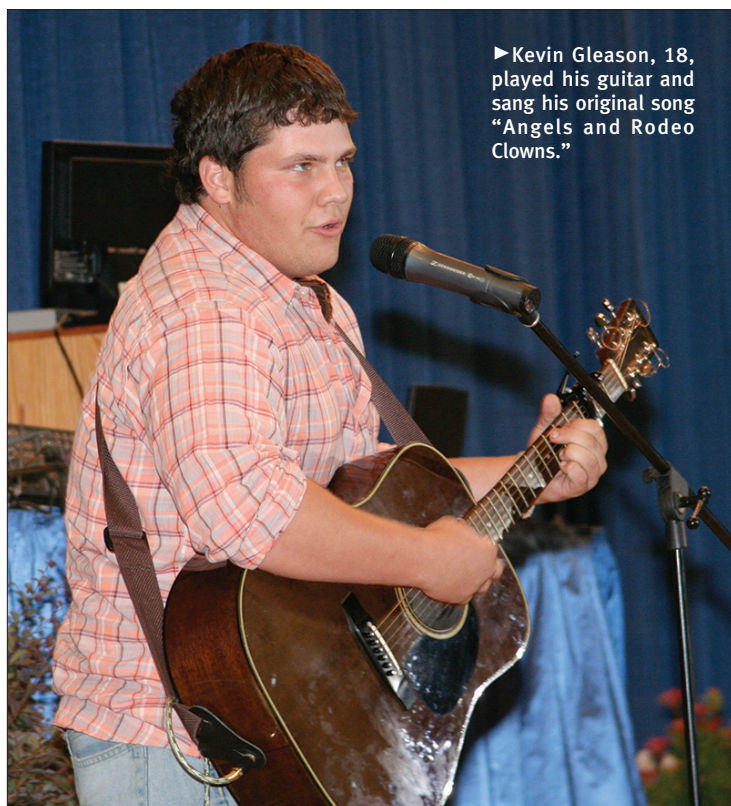
"All week kids were coming up to me and telling me how good I did," Gleason says. "It really meant a lot that they remembered me."

All three of this year's performers are sure to star in the NJAA community for years to come. Williams' performance and audition tapes were even incorporated into the Friday night slide show.

"I really felt like a star," Williams says. "Some kids even let me cut in front of them in the banana split line."



► John Williams, now 12, has been taking classical violin and fiddle lessons for two years.



► Kevin Gleason, 18, played his guitar and sang his original song "Angels and Rodeo Clowns."

PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA HARP



► Taylor Gazda, 14, realized her passion for music in elementary school.