



Creative Writing Winners



Created in 2002, the Creative Writing Contest gives National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members a chance to put their creativity and writing skills to work in an Angus environment.

Each age division (junior, intermediate and senior) was given a different topic and word length requirement.



Topics ranged from interest and activities in the NJAA to *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) specifications and their effect on marketing approach.

More than 30 juniors entered the 2007 contest. Judging was based on a 50-point scale and scored on grammar, spelling, organization and content.

First-place entries for each age division follow.



Senior Division

Topic: How will the new CAB specifications change the marketing approach of CAB products?

Certified Angus Beef Brand Specifications Change Marketing Approaches

by *Haley Rieff*, Bentonville, Ark.

The future belongs to producers who adapt their herds to meet consumer and retail demand. *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand is leading the way for those consumers and retailers. Angus has become the destination breed in the United States cattle industry, and Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) has been able to help everyone bring out the best that Angus cattle have to offer. The CAB brand's mission is to increase the demand for registered Angus cattle through a specification-based, branded-beef program to identify consistent, high-quality beef with superior taste. With this in mind, changing and modifying our product to meet consumer demand is inevitable.

Since the CAB brand was founded in 1978, many changes have taken place in regards to technical advances in processing, the weight of the cattle being processed and the marketing approach of the CAB brand. These factors, along with consumer demand for a more consistent product, prompted the CAB Board of Directors to accept new product uniformity standards. The original yield grade (YG) limit of 3.9 has been replaced by three more specific consistency requirements. These include a ribeye size bracket of 10-16 square inches (sq. in.), a carcass weight cap of 999 pounds (lb.) and an external fat thickness limit of 0.99 in. These standards should move the brand to a more consistent product that retail consumers have been requesting.

Along with the added benefit of a more consistent product, these new specifications

provide the CAB brand with new avenues for marketing. While much of the marketing efforts to date have focused on establishing consumer belief in a superior-quality product in relation to taste and tenderness, the marketing approach now can focus on establishing CAB as the most consistent product in the marketplace. Retailers and foodservice operators have long desired a consistent, uniformly sized product to offer their customers. Ribeye sizes from 6.9-19.0 sq. in. that were found under the former carcass specifications provided a wide variance in retail product size. Narrowing the ribeye size under the new format will provide a more consistent, more marketable product for retail outlets.

The new requirement to limit carcass size to less than 1,000 lb. will also help control product size, as heavier cattle tend to have larger ribeyes that often exceed consumer acceptance. The new limit on fat thickness of less than 1 in. should address cutability

concerns as a replacement for the yield grade specification that has been eliminated. A marketing approach that educates consumers to these new specifications would be the first step in establishing CAB as the most consistent beef product available.

Another marketing approach that becomes available is that CAB carcasses must meet the most stringent qualifications for quality and uniformity of any product in the marketplace. With the acceptance of the new product uniformity standards, carcasses must now meet 10 specifications to qualify for CAB. A marketing campaign that builds upon the quality of CAB by identifying the brand as the most size-consistent product available would not only be innovative in today's market but would stress the two most important factors that retail suppliers and consumers identify.

New marketing techniques, advertising campaigns and innovative merchandising strategies will enable CAB retailers and restaurants to drive sales and increase profits. However, CAB should continue its current advertising campaign with retailers that emphasizes that the brand will increase sales, grow profits, improve customer satisfaction and build repeat business. The following selling points should also continue to be promoted: CAB is the highest-quality beef with the greatest availability, takes the confusion out of buying beef, gives you an advantage over the competition, ensures

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— *Haley Rieff*

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product integrity and consistency in every box with the industry's most extensive tracking system, and CAB is the category leader in quality, availability, market share, customer recognition and marketing support.

The CAB brand promises exceptional taste with every mouthwatering bite. That's why it is the world's premium brand of fresh beef. Its reputation for excellence began nearly a quarter of a century ago. Today, the CAB brand is sold in the United States and in 50 international destinations and can be

relied upon at more than 8,000 discerning restaurants and grocery stores worldwide. CAB will continue its popularity and acceptance, because these new specifications will result in a more consistent plate presentation. These changes will allow for a more consistent product that will be more satisfying for both restaurant owners and consumers.

The changes in CAB specifications and in advertising offer a winning combination for Angus cattle, producers, restaurant owners, and consumers. Certified Angus Beef has

helped Angus producers capitalize on the most recent demand in the industry, with millions of dollars permeating through every segment. These changes in advertising will increase consumption by influencing the consumer. We must remember that it all starts with the consumer. Advertising CAB as the most consistent brand and the brand with the most stringent qualifications will continue to keep CAB the world's premier branded beef.



Intermediate Division

Topic: What activities have benefited you the most within the NJAA?

'Cooking' Out of My Comfort Zone

by Katelyn Wilson, Orleans, Ind.

It's the miles and the fuel. It's the long hours of dedication, work and sweat. It's the money spent and the friends made. It's the winning and the losing, the joy and the opportunities. It's the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), and it offers the experiences of a lifetime.

For some people, what we all know as "Nationals" is just another cattle show. It's another chance to get that gorgeous show heifer out and see yet another ring. But for many of us, Nationals is our summer vacation. It's where we get to travel, no matter how far, and we anticipate this one week all year round. This is the chance we have to catch up with old friends we've made in previous years and converse with people from all across the country. It's also where dreams come true in the many different contest areas.

My whole life I've always felt much more comfortable putting my thoughts down on paper than [verbally] into words. Writing just comes more naturally to me than talking in front of people, therefore, that is what I've always stuck to. However, a couple of years ago I came to the realization that staying inside my comfort zone was not at all going to broaden my horizons and make me a more well-rounded person. That year, I decided to join a Cook-Off team from my state and try my hand at acting. When the time came to perform, I was nervous to say the least. Putting it into actual words may

have been something more like "a complete basket case." I proceeded to pace back and forth, trying to memorize my lines, and ended up enlarging the knot in my stomach. After a moment, I just stopped where I was and thought to myself how ridiculous it was. I was going to be fine, I'd practiced until I was blue in the face and had my lines down pat.

A few minutes later, the coordinator came out and announced, "Indiana Intermediate Team, you're up next!" Everything I had just previously convinced myself of rushed out of my system, and I was back into the basket case state of mind. We entered the room, and the show began. Adrenaline was building up, my head was pounding, and I was sure my heart was about to just burst right out of my chest. Then, all of a sudden, something amazing happened. I had remembered my line! And I had spoken it with enthusiasm! The girl who had been so shy to get in front of people had just belted out a sentence! The rest of the skit was a breeze, and before I knew it, we were moving

our table out of the room and giving each other high fives. I went to the bathroom, just to look at myself in the mirror and soak it all in. When I looked down, I noticed my hands were shaking, and my face was as white as a sheet. Then I just rested my elbows on the counter and put my head in my hands. I thanked God that I had made it through, and then I realized something else and thanked Him for the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA).

What I recognized that day was that because of the NJAA, I had made a breakthrough and lived to tell about it. I'd slid out of my shell and done something I did not at all feel like doing. Beforehand I was dreading the experience and wishing that I hadn't let myself be talked into it, but at that moment I knew I had something to be thankful for. Because of the American Angus Auxiliary-sponsored *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Cook-Off Contest, I had become a more enhanced person. I knew if I just tried, I could go on to bigger and better things, and the Angus Association would lay the path for me to do so. The cattle are wonderful, but so are the people. It's not where you are that makes the memories. It's the people you meet and the opportunities that you seek.



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Junior Division

Topic: Who or what has sparked your interest to become active in the NJAA and why?

Listen to Your Dad

by Stephanie Lastovica, Salado, Texas

You should always listen to your dad. I do, because my dad is the best man I know. He is also the best cattleman I know. Cattle and agriculture have always been a way of life for him, and he was introduced to the Angus breed at an early age. Because he realizes what this lifestyle has done for him, I am thankful for his guidance in pointing me in the right direction in life. Thus began my journey as a proud member of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA).

When I was in fourth grade, I became a member of the Texas Junior Angus Association. I did not know exactly what was involved except that I had two Angus heifers to show, and I was excited! My dad taught me how to care for them, work with them and prepare for a show. I even started helping my dad with the breeding aspect of our program. Shortly after joining, I attended my first state Angus show. Wow! I immediately made many new friends, participated in the activities and had a great time showing cattle. It was obvious that I was hooked! I think I knew then that this was going to be a very important part of my future.

At the same time, I became a member of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). I attended my first national show at age 11 and will be participating in my second national show this summer. My father has encouraged me to be a part of all the many opportunities that the NJAA has and will have to offer, and has helped me in

preparation for them. With so many choices, I think it is one of the greatest, most worthwhile organizations that a young person can join. I plan for it to lead me into the American Angus Association as a producer later in life.

Being active at the state level led me to become involved at the national level, too. There were many people in our state organization who encouraged me to become involved, and my father told me to try any and all competitions. This has made a great impact on me, as I have gained lifelong skills and self-confidence while participating with others who shared my same interests.

In today's world, there are more opportunities than ever before to explore new avenues, try new things, and develop lifelong skills and talents. As I have grown, I have shared in the choosing of the areas in which I would like to be involved, and one of the most important of these is the NJAA. Once again, it was my father's guidance that led me to become an active member of the NJAA. As a member, one can proudly say, "I belong!" and know that you have a group that will be your peers for life. I am so glad I listened to my dad.



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