

# Friends Across States

Mentoring program develops lasting friendships.

by *Shelia Stannard*

Imagine attending your first or second National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), the world's largest single-breed beef cattle show. It might seem rather intimidating to some, but for National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members who have taken the initiative to participate in the NJAS Mentoring Program, it is a great opportunity to network and build lasting friendships.

Friendship is exactly what two juniors found when they participated in the NJAS Mentoring Program in Indianapolis, Ind., in 2006. Morgan Alexander, Berryville, Va., now 13 years old, says, "It was pretty cool for me to meet all the people and to make new friends." She and her family have kept in contact with her mentor, Roy Petteway, Zolfo Springs, Fla.

Morgan recalls that she and Roy would pick a time each day to gather signatures in the "autograph book" each mentor and protégé pair is given at the mentoring mixer the first of the week. The autograph books allow for easier introductions to NJAA directors, American Angus Association staff and those hosting the annual event. Now, Morgan says that if she is at a show and sees someone sitting alone, it is easier for her to introduce herself to that person.

But, Morgan and Roy's experience didn't last just one week. Late in 2007, the Alexander family traveled to Florida for a family vacation and made a stop at the Petteways' farm where they raise Angus cattle and citrus crops.

"Roy drove us around their farm and would stop at [a] tree, pick oranges and peel them for us," Morgan says, noting that doesn't happen on her family's farm in northern Virginia. Cattle would also enjoy the peeled oranges, eating them straight from Morgan's and younger brother Mark's hands.

"They (the Alexanders) are a wonderful family, and we had a great time showing them around our Florida ranch," Roy says.

"It was fun for us to share the differences," says Morgan's mother, Linda. "A lot of people worry about predators like coyotes and wildcats, but they lose part of their calf crop each year to alligators."



► Roy Petteway (left), Zolfo Springs, Fla., and Morgan Alexander, Berryville, Va., became friends after meeting through the NJAS Mentoring Program.



► Justin Brosey (left), NJAA Board chairman, says it's important to reach out to younger members. He and Alex Rogen, Brandon, S.D., have developed a mentor-protégé friendship.

Morgan says she particularly enjoyed stopping at the Petteways' greenhouse to learn how they graft two tree varieties together.

"The mentoring program gave us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to call someone we had met in another state," Linda says. "Roy was personable and polite when we met him in Indianapolis, and it was neat to learn from him in Florida."

## The more the merrier

Alex Rogen, Brandon, S.D., participated in the mentoring program the same year that Morgan did in Indiana. However, his mentor, Illinois native Justin Moritz, introduced Alex to his friend, Justin Brosey, Hamilton, Ohio, who has remained close friends with Alex. Since both Moritz and Brosey ran for the NJAA Board in 2006, they both spent time with Alex. Alex and Brosey began spending time together at other shows after that NJAS.

"Justin (Brosey) and I didn't start out as mentor-protégé at NJAS," Alex recounts. "I met Justin the year he was running for [the] Board in Indianapolis, and I was introduced to him by my mentor that year, Justin Moritz. Our friendship has grown over the years through e-mails, and he also sends me notes of encouragement for school, sports and for upcoming shows. We always make time to sit down and visit at a show, and I look forward to that."

Brosey agrees. "Although Alex and I have a mentor-protégé relationship, it did not start through the program. But because of my experiences working in the mentoring program, I realized that you don't have to be in a program to be involved as a mentor for someone," says Brosey, the 2008 chairman of the NJAA Board. "Our relationship, to me, has developed into way more than just a mentor-protégé relationship, but one of friendship. He is definitely someone I look forward to seeing at the shows throughout the year."

As an NJAA director, Brosey realizes how important it is to reach out to others, recalling his own personal experience with a junior Board member when he was younger. "Someone that stands out within the



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organization was past junior Board member and now friend Monica (Feeser) Jordan. As an NJAA Board member you are always kept really busy and not left with much free time, but this did not stop Monica from taking the time.”

Brosey says he got involved as a mentor to make a difference.

“It gave me an opportunity to share some of my great experiences in the NJAA with its next generation and become a friendly face

for them at the shows throughout the years,” he explains.

Brosey encourages others to do the same. “When you are at junior nationals, make sure that you make this protégé one of your main priorities because, whether you know it or not, you will be making a huge impact on their lives.”

Alex says he would like the opportunity to be a mentor this year in Des Moines, Iowa, at the 2008 NJAS. He encourages all first-

time attendees of the NJAS to sign up for the mentoring program and get involved in contests. “Be in as many contests as possible, like the Cook-Off contest, judging or quiz bowl — it’s a long week if you’re there just to show one head,” he suggests. “The more people you meet, the more fun you’ll have!”

His mom, Shally agrees. “If a group of kids from the state participates in the mentoring program, it encourages others to get involved.”

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