

# Raising the Bar



Junior leaders and advisors reap rewards at the first-ever Raising the Bar.

Story & photos by **Mathew Elliott**

**T**he task assigned to them wasn't easy, but for the 39 state junior Angus association officers and advisors who made the trip to Saint Joseph, Mo., the reward was great.

The first Raising the Bar conference was Oct. 12-14. After two days filled with fun presentations, brainstorming and team-building activities, the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members' task was to take the information and enthusiasm they gained at the officer training back to their state and regional associations.

### 'Coopetition' and more

The day began with Mary Kane, Kansas FFA executive secretary, presenting on setting the bar and the small progress over time that it takes to actually raise the bar. Her key to those successes was what she called "coopetition," coming from combining the words cooperation and competition.

"I want you to leave with two questions today," Kane said. "How do I play competitively, and how do I learn to help others play competitively? Together those are the key steps that will continue raising the bar."

NJAA Board Members were in control of the rest of the day. Membership Director Dana May shared how everyone could improve their state's membership, whether through existing members or by recruiting new members. Keeping the group active and communicating throughout the day was done by breaking into many different groups that focused on brainstorming and setting goals. After May's presentation, the group broke into groups by state so they could focus on their short- and long-term goals for improving their memberships.

Director Bridget Driscoll spoke on the importance of creating and sticking to a budget. Driscoll had members create a



► Andrew Rogen, S.D., closes his eyes and leans back while participating in a trust activity.

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quick budget of their own and then spoke on the importance of the unknown, such as car problems, speeding tickets, veterinary bills and other expenses that can arise. Concluding her presentation, Driscoll spoke of fundraising activities and the importance of thanking those who help you fundraise — donors and buyers alike.

Communications Director Kara Wilson presented the importance of parliamentary procedure in meetings. Wilson showed some humorous examples of how a meeting can get out of hand, leading into how good parliamentary procedure can improve the

productivity and efficiency of a meeting. To help members, a sheet was distributed with common phrases used in proper procedure, and groups were given meeting scenarios to either polish their existing knowledge or put their new knowledge to use.

After a lunch break, Board Members worked together to emphasize the importance of public speaking skills. As an example on public speaking, they took turns reading from a children's book. One would speak very slowly and in a monotone, while another would project their voice and speak with enthusiasm. After finishing, they passed out more books and had junior members practice their speaking skills.

While the juniors were learning the importance of public speaking, Director of Junior Activities James Fisher and Junior Activities Assistant Robin Ruff moved the advisors to a new room

to discuss working with volunteers and their importance to any organization.

College can be expensive, but NJAA Director Mallory Trospser spoke on how scholarships and NJAA experiences can be helpful. After showing the group a couple examples of college costs, it was soon very obvious that scholarships were worth the time it takes to fill them out. Trospser



► **ABOVE:** State officer groups set goals, brainstorm and share experiences with others.

► **RIGHT:** NJAA Board Member Andrew Foster helps spark ideas during a goal-setting activity.



► Participants toured the American Angus Association and Angus Productions Inc. offices.



► NJAA Board members were available to assist and facilitate Raising the Bar.





► Director of Junior Activities James Fisher speaks to advisors about the importance of volunteers to any organization.

advised starting early and keeping track of all activities and events that you participate in, saying that even small events can add up to show involvement over time. The NJAA provides a record book on its web site to assist juniors in their recordkeeping.

Thank you, thank you, thank you! Trospser concluded with the importance of thank-you notes. They don't take long to write, she said, but they mean so much to those who have helped you.

Following a short break, the group moved from the conference facilities to the American Angus Association office, where group and state photos were taken. Participants were given a tour of the Association office and Angus Productions Inc. (API) before eating dinner.

A rainy day interfered with the outdoor evening plans, but after some quick schedule adjustments, the participants enjoyed an evening of Rock 'n Bowl and fun.



► Conference participants focus on the small steps it takes to Raise the Bar.

The rain continued to interfere with plans on Sunday, when the group was scheduled to go to a ropes course where junior members would work on team-building activities. NJAA Board Members stepped up and were able to put together team-building activities at the conference facilities.

After lots of learning, some improvising and a lot of fun, the first-ever Raising the Bar was considered a success. According to May, the conference generated lots of positive feedback from both juniors and advisors.

"It was a time to come together and think about what has been done, and to think about new ideas for the future," May said. "I enjoyed seeing and listening to what everyone was getting done and then getting excited about their new ideas. Whether it was the juniors or the advisors, everyone was helping, and I saw a dynamic change in the officer groups from when they came in to when they left, working as a team."



► Jordan Paulsrud (left), Iowa, and Aaron Waugh (right), Minnesota, hold up Madison Henderson (center), Iowa, in an Angus trust activity.

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