



Shopping for Everyone

NJAS Trade Show provides variety of products and services.

Story & photos by *Christina Harp*

Each year the trade show at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) provides attendees with a unique shopping experience that cannot be found elsewhere. In addition to the typical show-related supplies, there are also items from home décor to herd management software; there is something for everyone. This year, more than 25 exhibitors showcased their wares at the NJAS.

The trade show is successful because it allows vendors from across the country to showcase their ideas and products in a centralized location, says Jake Scott, chairman for this year's trade show.

"We don't have anything like this at home," Susan Clary of Brodnax, Va., says. "There is more variety and opportunity to purchase Angus products."

Shoppers like Clary appreciate the NJAS trade show for the range of merchandise. C.J. Brown Studios' wealth of stationery and paintings drew customers who were looking for artwork featuring cattle and rural landscapes.

Rockin' B Trading Co. was also in attendance, showcasing its one-of-a-kind Western-theme pieces. Owner Lynn Baumann says his biggest sellers are hand-painted signs and mirrors made from recycled barn and fence wood. Reproductions recast from original Western sheriff's badges are a fun item for kids visiting the booth.

Across the aisle, Norris Nowlin of Townsend Sales Co. in Trafalgar, Ind., says trade shows are the best way to advertise his products, including cattle chutes, scales and insecticide applicators.

"It's the exposure. Customers can see, touch and feel what they are going to buy," Nowlin says, noting that 30% of his sales come from trade shows.

Coming to the trade show is well worth his time, according to Nowlin, because "everybody that stops and talks is a customer."



► **Above:** George Benjamin Jr., owner of AgriBuckle, has been coming to the NJAS for 18 years.



► **Above:** James Navia, Deport, Texas, sorts through replica sheriff's badges at the Rockin' B Trading Co. booth.



► **Below:** Julie Whiteside, Queenstown, Md., shops for Angus artwork from C.J. Brown Studios.



Trade show veteran

The same can be said for vendor George Benjamin Jr. The master leathersmith and buckle designer returned to Tulsa, Okla., for his 18th NJAS trade show and plans to be in Iowa in 2008. The Kissimmee, Fla., native says that of the 36 years he has been attending trade shows, the Angus shows are his favorite.

“They have the best support system of any show,” he says.

He sells his products, which range from custom-made belts and buckles to photo frames, at wholesale prices to Angus enthusiasts, who appreciate his quality craftsmanship and attention to detail.

Benjamin points out a belt buckle on a customer, noting that it was one of his designs. Adam Blumer, Chesnee, S.C., who bought the buckle 22 years ago from Benjamin, smiles in agreement.

“I love his work,” Blumer says as he places an order for a new buckle. Benjamin sizes and attaches



► C.J. Brown signs a painting for one of her customers.

buckles to the belts sold at his booth, and serviced more than 25 belts in Tulsa, free of charge, for his customers. He guarantees his titanium-and-jeweler’s-brass buckles for 10 years.

“I have three phone numbers on the back of my buckles, so people can call me anytime if they have a problem,” Benjamin says. “I never lose a customer.”

Benjamin’s commitment to his customers has made his booth a popular stop for trade show attendees.

“Last year, the kids asked for smaller bracelets; this year, I brought them,” Benjamin says, adding that the NJAS is all about the juniors, and the trade show is really no different.

“The kids teach me, and I help them,” he notes.

Benjamin’s creations do their own teaching, too. The dies used to create the animals used on his products are retooled, or updated, every 10 to 12 years, allowing changes in animal body type during the past 36 years to be seen. Eventually, the dies will be donated to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Next year, AgriBuckle customers will have the opportunity to purchase new Angus bull and Angus cow-calf designs that have each taken more than three months to design.

Angus enthusiasts should be sure to check out the trade show to do some early holiday shopping during “Christmas in July” at the 2008 NJAS in Des Moines, Iowa.



► Above: Christine Catton, Lafayette, Ill., tries on a turquoise necklace from JRC Designs.