



The Gift That Keeps Giving

Junior members give from the heart a gift that will reach mothers and children in need.

Story & photos by Tosha Powell

The 2008 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Des Moines, Iowa, had the unique theme of “Christmas in July.” The host state of Iowa decided to take this meaning to heart and give Angus junior members the opportunity to give back during opening ceremonies at NJAS. Each state participated with open arms and took the Christmas theme seriously, dressing as Christmas elves during the parade of states. As each state group entered the showing they bore gifts such as stuffed animals, toys and school supplies to be donated to the musical group Sheltered Reality, which distributes donations to women and children in need.

Sheltered Reality employs the power of music to engage and motivate audiences to make positive changes both in themselves and the world they live in. Through stories of hardship and triumph, and a sequence of “Steps to Success,” Sheltered Reality teaches personal empowerment and character building, and then encourages the application of these abilities to its primary focus of advocacy for youth in crisis.

The nonprofit musical organization’s membership spans all ages; however, the majority of members are youth ages 7 to 18. Members of the organization represent the states of Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas,



Missouri, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Colorado, Ohio, and most recently Utah, Nebraska and Tennessee. Sheltered Reality members believe that music can have meaning, yet be a blast at the same time.

Sheltered Reality was first organized in 1997 by Steve Schlosser, West Branch, Iowa, and grew from one group of drummers to five groups. In the past few years it has grown to several group sites in each of a dozen different states. Members of the group learn music and how to drum to it and practice choreography at monthly lessons, participate in mission projects, and try to live the message they share with others.

The National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) showed the Sheltered Reality group its big spirit. No other group had ever given such a large donation to the organization, and they were quite surprised.

“They had to call in backup to get all the boxes of gifts home,” says Mary Greiman, the contact person from the Iowa host state. “They had not expected such a large offering. Sheltered Reality gives these items to families in need, and we (the host state) knew the members of the junior association would be more than willing to help those in need.”

During Sheltered Reality’s showcase, a few members of the NJAA audience were able to jump in and experience drumming in front of a large audience, including Greiman.

“With songs like ‘Hey, Mickey’ and ‘Cotton Eyed Joe,’ Angus juniors were up on their feet, dancing and having fun. It was a great way to kick off the junior show,” says Robin Ruff, American Angus Association junior activities assistant.

To date, more than 100,000 people have seen Sheltered Reality perform. In addition to thousands of church, school and community shows, they have played several times at the Iowa State Fair, at the Easter Sunrise service at Mount Rushmore

the past two years, at the Wal-Mart national associates meeting in Arkansas and following a performance by Garth Brooks at the Opryland Hotel.



PHOTO BY MATHEW ELLIOTT