



The Super Six

NJAA officers reflect upon their tenure on the Board.

Story & photos by **Mathew Elliott**

As this year's group of six retires from the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Board of Directors, the *Angus Journal* asked them to reflect on their roles and to provide some words of wisdom for up-and-coming junior leaders. Here's your opportunity to get to know the six young adults who worked hard as the leadership team for your organization this past year.

Q: What motivated you to run for the NJAA Board of Directors?

Amanda Schnoor: What motivated me were the past junior Board members and how they treated me when I was a young junior. They always talked and smiled and hugged me. When you are a young kid and people are doing that, it makes you look up to them. So, I wanted to give back to the juniors what I received. When those young kids look up to you or come to you, it makes you feel special. It was all for the juniors.

Kristen Oaks: I wanted the chance to encourage a junior member like my first experience when a "Green Jacket" encouraged me. I also wanted the opportunity to help run the largest junior beef breed association in the country!

Tracee Veenstra: Since I wasn't able to be involved with the association for a long period of time prior to running for the Board, I really wanted to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the NJAA. The association had given me so many different opportunities, friendships and an extended wealth of knowledge that I really wanted an opportunity to give it back. I thought "What better way than running for the National Junior Angus Board?"

Zebadiah Gray: There were several reasons that I wanted to run for the Board. Angus cattle have always been a passion of mine, and what better way to indulge this passion than to help coordinate the youth programs while meeting thousands of other Angus enthusiasts?

Kindra Wood: I attended my first junior nationals when I was 9 years old. There in Perry, Ga., I met members of the "Green Jackets." I was in awe of them. They seemed to be the elite of the elite, yet they took time with some young people, including myself, to make sure that we enjoyed our week at nationals. This was my first experience with the NJAA Board, and I was inspired to be just like them so that one day I

might make a difference in the experience of some young juniors.

Alex Tolbert: There were many things that influenced my decision to run for the Board. One would be my passion for cattle and the beef industry. Another was my interest in youth livestock programs and helping to educate today's young people about production agriculture and, specifically, beef cattle production. Finally, I wasn't quite ready for adult membership.

Q: What is your favorite memory of being on the Board?

Schnoor: There are so many I can think of, but the most important ones are the friendships I have built across the country.

Oaks: I have several! Our first Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference together in Boise, Idaho; the spring Board meeting in Steamboat Springs, Colo., where we learned who should never own a pair of skis; and just recently in Reno, Nev., with the "old five."

Veenstra: There are so many different ones, from LEAD conferences to national shows. One of my favorite events was probably the Western regional in Reno, Nev. The show was a unique experience since it was a smaller-level show that allowed the Board members to bond with the juniors at events such as the pool party.

Another favorite would be both National Junior Angus Shows (NJAS) since I have been on the Board. The opportunity to work with the juniors and assist them is a rewarding experience. In addition, it is very exciting to watch the juniors grow and prosper in the different events that they are involved in.

Gray: My favorite memory was our spring 2007 Board meeting, which was in Steamboat Springs, Colo. It was a great team-bonding event. We cooked our own meals, and I had a ton of fun learning how to ski for the first time, even though I was horrible.

Wood: I have so many great memories that it is difficult to choose just one. I guess I would have to say the spring meeting in Steamboat Springs, Colo., when we went skiing. I guess you could call what I did "sking." It was obvious that I have never seen much snow. From the cold snow that I stayed on most of the day to the white rings around



▶ Alex Tolbert helps American Angus Association Regional Manager Chuck Grove check tattoos during NJAS check-in.



► Kindra Wood walks into closing ceremonies.

my eyes where the sunglasses blocked the sun, I was totally out of my element. Who knew the sun could blister you when it is cold? Not in the South.

Tolbert: Meeting great people from all over the country, talking with producers and getting to know some of the sharpest young people in America are certainly some of my first thoughts. As I reflect on what made this experience truly memorable, I can't help but say that it was the 17 special people that I had the opportunity to serve with.

The six that were before us showed us how to lead. The six behind us showed us how to connect with the younger members. And my six taught me how to work as a team. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to work with some of the most talented, selfless and hard-working people who I have ever met. These people I will never forget, and I cannot say thank you enough for what they have done.

Q: What have you learned while being on the Board?

Schnoor: Well, working with 11 other people that you hardly know, you learn to work together, to be patient, and you figure out that everything has a way of working itself out.

Oaks: Our group could not be comprised of six people more diverse

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The retiring six



Alex Tolbert, chairman

Alex Tolbert is the 21-year-old son of Delia and Ed Tolbert and is from Nicholson, Ga. He graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in agricultural economics.



Tracee Veenstra, vice chairman

Tracee Veenstra is the 22-year-old daughter of Diana and Gary Veenstra and is from Springfield, Minn. She graduated from Minnesota State University with a dual major in speech communication and management.



Kindra Wood, leadership director

Kindra Wood is the 20-year-old daughter of June and Keith Wood and is from Holly Pond, Ala. As a junior at Auburn University, she majors in animal science.



Zebadiah Gray, membership director

Zebadiah Gray is the 21-year-old son of Julie and Terry Gray. He is from Toledo, Iowa, and attends Iowa State University, majoring in animal science.



Amanda Schnoor, Foundation director

Amanda Schnoor is the 20-year-old daughter of Mindy and Brad Schnoor. She is from Chowchilla, Calif., and attends Oregon State University, where she judges livestock and is pursuing a degree in animal science.



Kristen Oaks, communications director

Kristen Oaks is the 20-year-old daughter of Rebekah and Butch Oaks and is from Calhoun, La. Kristen is a junior at Louisiana State University, where she double-majors in agricultural business and mass communications.

► **Right:** Amanda Schnoor helps hand out golf balls at the NJAS Foundation Golf Tournament.

► **Below:** Officers Kindra Wood, Amanda Schnoor, Tracee Veenstra, Andrew Foster, and junior activities assistant Robin Ruff help juniors check in.



PHOTO BY ANNE TRENHOLM



than we are. We each have a totally different personality, and we come from six very different places. But our differences have served to help complement each other and to help us learn to function as a team. This has challenged me and taught me to listen and respect everyone's opinions and visions, not just with the Board, but in all facets of life.

Veenstra: I have definitely learned that teamwork is so essential when it comes to accomplishing different events and tasks. The Board has allowed me to grow into an individual that can manage many different tasks, and it has developed me into a stronger speaker and a more outgoing individual.

I have gained so many different things, and one of the most important would be the friendships. Even though my term may be ending, I have friendships that are going to last a lifetime.

Gray: I think the biggest thing that I have learned is to approach things with an open mind. It is amazing the number of problems that can be solved if people would just put themselves in the other peoples' shoes. I have made a bold effort to not let my preconceptions get in the way of finding the best solution to a problem.

Wood: My time on the Board has been a valuable learning experience. It has taught

me to be very organized, patient and committed. My last year on the Board, I also served as the Student President of the College of Agriculture at Auburn University. The skills I learned while serving on the NJAA Board helped me to be a better leader at my university while juggling school, my Board duties and my commitment to the College of Agriculture.

Tolbert: The most important lesson that I learned while on the Board was selflessness. I worked with some of the most selfless people that I have ever been associated with. They worked hard, quietly picking up the slack, and never worried about recognition.

Q: What do you see for the future of the NJAA?

Schnoor: The future of the NJAA is going to be amazing, because there is always room for things to grow. And I think it's going to grow, and more options will be available for juniors.

Oaks: Three words — growth, possibility and shining stars!

Growth. I believe the NJAA will continue to grow at a steady rate, which is an awesome thing. But, I also feel it is extremely important that we continue to serve each member and remain on a personal level with each member.

Possibility. I feel we have the possibility to accomplish great things, both with our association and with each member. We have already done so much with the Angus Foundation and events like the NJAS and LEAD, what other great things can we achieve?

Shining stars. Each member is a star in his or her own right; we have so much talent distributed throughout our member base, and I hope we never forget that!

Veenstra: A growing and prosperous organization. The NJAA is so focused on improvement, and I see only success in the future. With the outstanding people working in and with the organization, I see it continuing to grow and developing many more programs to help continue its success.

Gray: The NJAA is full of very ambitious individuals that make a dynamic team when they work together, and I think the organization has a very bright future.

Wood: I see an unlimited future for the NJAA. This awesome organization will continue to increase in members, leadership and knowledge. The NJAA is the future of the beef industry.

Tolbert: I see a greater outreach from the organization to the state levels. In the future I believe that Board members will be more visible and more accessible with the introduction of regional leadership conferences. It is my hope that the NJAA will grow, touching and teaching more young people about the beef industry.

Q: What are some of your other hobbies or activities?

Schnoor: Watersports; I love to wakeboard. But most important is family time.

Oaks: Trying to finish school! I'm very active in my sorority — Kappa Delta. I'm also a senator in Louisiana State University student government, and I am a member of the student ambassador group for the College of Agriculture.

Veenstra: I love to be outdoors, whether playing different sports, such as softball or sand volleyball, or fishing and waterskiing. In addition, I have started to scrapbook in my spare time, now that I have it after graduating from college.

Gray: I enjoy hunting and fishing. I also like to go to rodeos.

Wood: I enjoy clogging and attending Auburn football games.

Tolbert: I enjoy being around livestock. Outside of that, I like to spend time with my friends and family.

Q: Who is your favorite band or musical group?

Schnoor: Music depends on the day and what mood I am in, although I enjoy everything.

Oaks: Tough choice, currently The Fray ... but I can't forget my all-time favorite: Janis Joplin!

Veenstra: I like all sorts of music, so it is difficult to pick just one! I enjoy country music, such as Kenny Chesney, Dierks Bentley and Sugarland. However, I even enjoy contemporary music and rap.

Gray: Chris LeDoux and Garth Brooks are my favorite artists.

Wood: George Strait.

Tolbert: Pat Green.

Q: What is your favorite movie?

Schnoor: Same as music, I enjoy all kinds of movies, but I prefer comedies.

Oaks: *Steel Magnolias*.

Veenstra: I love animated movies, such as *Shrek* and *Ice Age*.

Gray: *Chisum*.

Wood: *Sweet Home Alabama*.

Tolbert: My favorite movie would either be *Gladiator* or *Tombstone*.

Q: What advice would you have for juniors interested in running for the Board?

Schnoor: Be ready for an adventure, but make sure you will give it your all, because you always have to remember that you are an example and that eyes are on you at all times. Remember that you are a leader for the juniors, and you represent a large association, so take advantage of the opportunities that they give you.

Oaks: Be prepared to work hard and make sure it is your first priority. It will easily be one of the best experiences of your life, so soak up every moment — don't sleep until you have to! Enjoy every single second of these two years, because the time flies by.

Veenstra: Be yourself! The opportunity to be on the Board is so rewarding. However,

be ready to work hard, be a team member, be dedicated and especially have fun. The NJAA is one of the best, and we need the best individuals for the job. If you're interested, go for it; don't ever second-guess yourself, because you may never get another chance.

Gray: Don't let anyone tell you that you can't run or that you won't make it. If you want to run for the Board, talk to everybody. But, don't start the week of junior nationals. Talk to everybody at every show you attend, starting tomorrow. I guarantee you will meet a lot of interesting and fun people. It will be a great experience.

Wood: I would advise young juniors to follow their heart in running for the Board. It was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life, and through this experience I became a better young person. I learned valuable life lessons, acquired unlimited friends and met some very unique individuals along the way. All of this while being part of a great organization that I hope I have helped to make a little better before leaving.

Tolbert: My advice is simple: hard work and dedication. Year after year it is the hardest-working and most dedicated candidates that get elected.



► Justin Brosey (left) and Zebadiah Gray help in the showing at the NJAS.

PHOTO BY CHELSEA GOOD