

NJAA: Leading *the* Way

The six officers of the National Junior Angus Association share their views on the Angus industry and participation in the world's largest junior beef breed organization.

Story by
SHELIA STANNARD

Leader. Webster defines a *leader* as “a person who has commanding authority or influence.” However, in the Angus business a leader can best be illustrated by the officers and directors of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), who wear the green jackets. These young men and women come from all regions of the United States and offer a variety of leadership styles and personalities to the more than 10,500 members of the NJAA.

“The NJAA Board is like a thumbprint,” says NJAA Board Chairman Melissa Pickrell. “No two are exactly alike.”

Each summer during the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), six new directors are elected to serve a two-year term on the NJAA Board. At the same time, the six directors who have served one year are elected into the six officer positions, allowing all Board members to work with 11 different people during their terms.

“As these six Board members move into officer positions, they have accepted the challenge of being strong leaders for the membership,” says James Fisher, director of junior activities. “They are setting the basis for our programs into the next century.”

This year's NJAA Board is led by Pickrell, a December 1999 graduate of Western Kentucky University from Paris, Ky. The officer team is rounded out by Julie Dameron, Lexington, Ill., vice chairman; Garrett Pohlman, Norfolk, Neb., Foundation director; Lindsey Trospen, Hamilton, Mo., communications director; Julie Scarlett, Snow Camp, N.C., leadership director; and John Melton, Bridgewater, Va., membership and information director.

The six directors who were elected in 1999 in Tulsa, Okla., include Brandon Douglas, Gentry, Ark.; Miranda Grissom, Prague, Okla.; Jamie Meyer, Douglass, Kan.; Sy Olson, Hereford, Texas; Allison Porter, Jefferson, Ga.; and Sonya Smith, Lebanon, Tenn.

Even though these leaders come from different backgrounds and have different



Garrett Pohlman and Julie Scarlett lead "I'll Take Beef for 2000," a spin-off of the game show Jeopardy! during the 1999 LEAD Conference "Back to the Basics" held in Saint Joseph, Mo. During this workshop, the junior participants got to test their knowledge about the Angus and beef industries.



During the icebreakers at the 1999 LEAD Conference, Melissa Pickrell demonstrates her ability to be a successful leader and her outstanding hula-hoop talent.



Lindsey Trospen gets a chuckle from one of the other board members during one of the board's regular meetings. The board officially meets three times per year, in addition to other called meetings.

plans for their futures, they all share a common bond — a love for Angus cattle and a concern for the future of the beef industry and its young people. The officers shared some of their thoughts about the beef industry and how it and the NJAA have enhanced their leadership and life skills.

Describe what you feel are the biggest issues facing the Angus business and the beef industry today.

Pickrell: All too often the average producer fails to consider where the end product goes — to the CONSUMER! Failing to keep the consumer in mind restricts maximum production for the producer. We must realize that conformity to needs of the consumer is a must in order to survive in this protein-source competition. Consumer concerns like safety, convenience and nutrition must first be identified, then applied to beef production in order to retain a successful industry.

Pohlman: The biggest issue facing the beef industry today is supplying consumers with a quality, consistent product. To do this, several things need to be done. First, better communication needs to be established between all segments of the beef industry. Second, more producers should take advantage of branded beef programs. Finally, in order to compete with other meats, producers need to focus on producing a more uniform beef cattle



Julie Dameron cools off a group of excited juniors during the 1999 LEAD Conference. The "super soaker" was definitely a fun way to get the young peoples' attention.



In addition to planning and teaching various workshops at the LEAD Conferences, the junior board gets a chance to listen, watch and learn from others. Here *John Melton* relaxes while he listens to one of the speakers.

herd. These all should help increase demand for beef and assure a quality, consistent product for consumers.

What role does the NJAA have in the future of the beef industry?

Melton: The NJAA will play a great role in the future of the beef industry. The NJAA is currently the largest and most active junior beef breed organization in the world. Additionally, we are doing our part to create enthusiasm and interest in young people with regard to this industry and to agriculture in general.

At the same time, we are preparing our



The National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) board takes a break between its activities at the 1999 North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Ky. This year's board includes (bottom row, from left) *Melissa Pickrell*, Paris, Ky.; *Julie Dameron*, Lexington, Ill.; *Julie Scarlett*, Snow Camp, N.C.; *Jamie Meyer*, Douglass, Kan.; (second row, from left) *Brandon Douglas*, Gentry, Ark.; *Sy Olson*, Hereford, Texas; *John Melton*, Bridgewater, Va.; and *Garrett Pohlman*, Norfolk, Neb.; (on the stairs, from left) *Allison Porter*, Jefferson, Ga.; *Miranda Grissom*, Prague, Okla.; *Sonya Smith*, Lebanon, Tenn.; and *Lindsey Trospen*, Hamilton, Mo. [PHOTO BY ANGIE STUMP DENTON]

junior members through our LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) Conference. LEAD is a wonderful opportunity to instill leadership values in members who are or will be leading their individual state organizations. Programs such as the NJAS and LEAD also offer opportunities for junior members to interact with one another. This contributes to heightened social skills and a chance to make lasting friendships that may prove important to the future success of the Angus breed.

Trospen: One of the greatest tasks the NJAA is faced with is the continuance of education of junior Angus members, who in turn are an effective outlet in extending this education about the beef industry to general youth audiences. Education about beef must begin at a young age. Too often adults' opinions and views are

too strongly established to change. Young adults today are being fed numerous messages about the health and nutrition of beef, whether it is from media sources or from peers. The NJAA has in excess of 10,000 members nationwide who can and are assisting to combat the negative messages being sent to young people about agriculture.

Why was it important to you to take an active role in the NJAA?

Pohlman: I have been involved with the NJAA practically all of my life. Participating in Angus activities was something that we all did as a family. By having two older brothers who took an active role in the NJAA, it was almost natural for me to follow in their footsteps. Also, I felt that it was a great opportunity to build upon my

leadership skills and to build lifelong friendships.

Scarlett: Being active in the NJAA provides connections across the country, and you learn more about the industry every day. It also helps families and friends grow together.

Where do you see yourself in the future?

Pohlman: My career plans involve attending medical school upon graduation from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After graduating from medical school I would like to practice medicine as a human physician in a rural community. This will also allow me to maintain an Angus herd and to give my family some of the same opportunities that I had growing up on a farm.

Trosper: I am graduating in May, and this question has been testing my sanity lately! As I graduate, I ponder many avenues — the choices available today are mind-boggling. My experience and education in marketing and public relations lead me to seek a career in this area. Eventually corporate communications and public relations are where I envision myself. However, I am still holding on to the hope of owning my own business or company. Graduate school is also in the future, as it will provide me with additional choices, I believe.

How do you see yourself involved in the Angus industry five years and 10 years from now?

Dameron: In five years I see myself being involved in my local and state associations. In 10 years I see myself still being involved in my local and state associations and in the American Angus Association. I plan to raise a family that is involved in the Angus breed because I want to give my children the same opportunities that I received.

Melton: I see myself participating in this business with my family. We currently have a 45- to 50-head herd of Angus cattle. We have plans to scale down a little from these numbers and continue to be active with our embryo-transfer (ET) and artificial-insemination (AI) programs. I would also like to continue to be as active as I can with regard to American Angus and other Angus activities. I see myself contributing to junior programs in the future as well.

How do you feel you've grown during the time since you were elected to the NJAA Board of Directors?

Pickrell: I think that serving on the NJAA Board of Directors has allowed me many opportunities to grow and to learn. I feel that I have certainly learned more about the Angus breed and the people behind it. Traveling the country to meet producers and junior members has allowed me to gain a much broader perspective of the breed. Not only do I now have a greater appreciation for Angus cattle, but I have definitely gained respect for each person who has contributed to the industry as well.

Scarlett: I've become more tolerable of different views and opinions. I am even more responsible and am able to better communicate with people.

What has been the biggest challenge you've faced during your term? How did you learn from it?

Dameron: The biggest challenge that the six of us faced was opening communication. When we began our term, we didn't know one another well enough to express our thoughts openly; therefore, we had to learn to communicate with one another and to realize that we were not going to agree all of the time, and that we would have to compromise and work together more creatively. After we got over that hurdle, we worked together very efficiently.

Trosper: Perhaps not the biggest challenge I faced, but one that required some soul-searching was my decision to study and intern in London through the summer. I was faced with a very personal decision that could have affected others. In choosing to be absent from the country for three months, I had to prioritize several things in my life. Two of the most important things at the time were my education and future career and my commitment to the NJAA as an elected leader. I learned, in making my decision, to rationalize and compromise. I made the decision that would benefit me the most in the future, while at the same time not compromising my commitment to the NJAA — thanks to Internet technology and my trip back for the National Junior Angus Show. I also learned — good or bad — that I could do two things at once.

Describe the camaraderie and friendships you've developed while on the junior board.

Dameron: The first meeting the six of us had together in Indianapolis was a strange experience. I remember watching the retiring six Board members express such sadness that they were leaving the

Board. I thought to myself, "Why are they so upset and crying? They're still all going to see each other at the shows. What's the big deal?" Well, I am going to eat my words because I will probably be the first person to cry when July comes around.

I also remember thinking to myself, "What are these five other people and I possibly going to have in common besides Angus cattle?" The six of us were from all over the United States, and we were going to work together for the next two years. Having experienced the past year and a half with the Board, I can say that we have built friendships that will last forever.

Scarlett: I've created friendships that will last a lifetime with Board members and other members I might not have met if it had not been for the Board.

Tell about the office you hold, and how that fits you and your leadership style/personality.

Dameron: Serving as vice chairman fits my personality and leadership qualities because it allows me to be involved in every committee. I have the opportunity to listen to the committee meetings and to give input when needed.

The other reason this position fits me is because I have the opportunity to work with the delegate/candidate dinner and the election process. The election process is important to me because these junior members are the future of the Angus breed.

Trosper: My office, communications director, is directly and closely related to my field of study in college — marketing/public relations/advertising. This enables me to bring much of what I learn in the classroom, in working and internship situations, and in school organizations to my position and to use it effectively. I ran for the Board expressing my desire to assist in increased communication to our membership; and while at times it seems to be a long time in coming, I believe communication has improved on the Web and through our newsletter. My position fits not only my interests, but also my personality/style. It takes creativity, persistence and, of course, effective communication — all qualities I believe I possess.

What will your team do that makes a difference for the NJAA membership? How will you be remembered?

Melton: My team will continue the excellent tradition of dedication to the membership by NJAA boards. I believe in

continuing the growth of this organization, and I think our team has helped to maintain the positive trend in new membership. By helping to increase the membership and starting such contests as the graphic-design contest, I think my team has made a real difference to the future of the NJAA. I wish us to be remembered as a team that worked hard to advance the opportunities of our members and to ensure a solid future for the NJAA and the Angus business.

Pickrell: Our team is a very outgoing one. Because of this it has made an impression on many adult and junior members. This is an ongoing goal with each Board, but I feel that our team of six has done an outstanding job of attaining it. I hope that others remember our Board that way as well. Likewise, I hope that I am remembered as an outgoing individual who has a strong love for the NJAA and the people involved in it.

What is your personal goal/philosophy?

Pohlman: My personal goal involves my position as Foundation director. This year I would like to implement a new fund-raiser for the Foundation. I am currently working on putting together a benefit golf tournament for the Foundation. Hopefully, with the help of the senior members and the Foundation board, this golf tournament will be a success and become a tradition for the Foundation.

Scarlett: My goals are to improve the LEAD Conference and to improve par-

ticipation in the NJAS contests. I would also like to be a very good role model for junior members.

Write an advertisement for the NJAA and describe how you would encourage others to join.

Melton:

Step up!

Grab on.

Sit back.

We'll take you for the ride of your life! Take advantage of the opportunity you've been offered by becoming a member of the world's largest and strongest junior beef breed organization – the National Junior Angus Association.

Pickrell:

There are two types of people in this world ...

*Those who show Angus cattle
and*

Those who wish they did!

Educating people of the many opportunities in the NJAA is very important while recruiting. The NJAA can easily sell itself once presented to a prospective member. It's an outstanding group in which to belong!



Editor's Note: Shelia Stannard is the assistant director of public relations for the American Angus Association. For more information on the NJAA, contact James Fisher, director of junior activities. For a junior association membership application.