



On Deck for Success

The American Angus Auxiliary awards scholarships to young Angus enthusiasts.

by Jenna Whitaker, field editor

The National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) is always a week to remember, and this year, National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members stepped up to the plate. A week in The Bluegrass State recognized standouts from across the industry, including nine juniors who were named recipients of American Angus Auxiliary scholarships.

For more than 50 years, the American Angus Auxiliary has recognized outstanding junior members with the American Angus Auxiliary Scholarship and has awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships to this year's standout members.

Typically, five female and five male recipients are chosen and ranked, with the scholarship pool divided amongst them based on their individual placings. Individuals must be nominated for recognition by their state or regional association the spring preceding their freshman year of college.

During this application process, cattlemen are selected to be entered into the race for the title of Miss American Angus. The next woman to don the red coat will be crowned at the annual Angus Convention in November.

The contestants for the 2026-2027 Miss American Angus title are Molly Hansen, Carrington, N.D.; Madalyn Carpenter, Wadesboro, N.C.; Camryn Greene, Slaughter, La.; and Ella Eathington, Avon, Ill.

Molly Hansen



For Molly Hansen, Carrington, N.D., agriculture and the Angus breed have shaped every

aspect of her life. Raised on her family's Angus seedstock operation, Hansen actively participates in the NJAA and North Dakota Junior Angus Association. She currently serves as the North Dakota Angus queen and has led her state junior association as president for the past two years.

A standout student at Carrington High School, Hansen's achievements extend far beyond the classroom, including national success in livestock judging, public speaking, agricultural business and leadership competitions through FFA and 4-H.

Hansen's passion for the beef industry is matched by her commitment to serving others and advancing the Angus breed.

"Every part of my junior career has compelled me to give back in so many ways, and I have seen how each aspect has helped mold me into the leader I am today," she says. "Because of Angus, I have established connections with other industry professionals, developed a strong work ethic, grown a passion for raising cattle, and learned to hold myself to a higher standard. Throughout each phase of my life, I will continue to promote, advocate, and support the Angus breed and beef cattle industry."

She is attending Lake Land College this fall and plans to pursue a career in animal genetics, with the goal of contributing to Angus breed advancement through research and innovation. "Becoming a leader in animal genetics within the Angus breed myself would ultimately be the biggest dream come true," she says.

Hansen was awarded a \$2,400 scholarship by the Auxiliary.

Daisy Plaschke



Hallsville, Texas, native Daisy Plaschke has distinguished herself as a leader, Angus breeder and

advocate for the beef industry. Raised on her family's cattle operation, Plaschke has built a successful Angus program while participating in the Texas Junior Angus Association, NJAA, FFA and 4-H. Her accomplishments include numerous championships in the show ring, leadership roles at the county, district, and state levels, and recognition in livestock judging, public speaking and community service.

Plaschke currently serves as first vice president of the Texas Junior Angus Association and as president of Harrison County 4-H, where she is known for mentoring younger members and encouraging others to succeed.

Plaschke credits the cattle industry with teaching her resilience, responsibility and perseverance.

"Using my voice as a young leader in the Angus community means more than just winning in the show ring or holding a title," she says. "It means showing up for the people and the culture that made me who I am."

Looking ahead, Plaschke plans to attend East Texas A&M University-Commerce, earn a degree in agribusiness and pursue a career in agricultural law. Her goal is to advocate for livestock producers and strengthen the future of agriculture.

Plaschke was awarded a \$2,300 scholarship by the Auxiliary.

Erica Driscoll



If you ask Erica Driscoll where she learned the value of a good work ethic, she'll point you back to *The Business Breed*.

Raised on a purebred cow-calf operation in Williamsburg, Iowa, Driscoll has spent her life immersed in the agricultural industry, her time in and out of the show ring showed her the direct correlation between hard work and success.

Driscoll currently serves as the secretary for the Iowa Junior Angus Association, Williamsburg FFA and the Iowa County Youth Council, and vice president of her local DECA club and district FFA chapter. Stepping up in leadership has always been important to Driscoll, and she says participation in Angus conferences has only helped.

"I have learned how to be a leader, the value of being organized and the power of creating opportunities for others," she says. "I have always looked up to the older members of our association, and I hope I have inspired the younger."

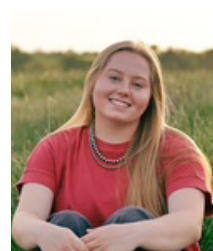
Driscoll sees her role as an advocate for the beef industry and Angus breed as a chance to share her heritage with the world.

She explains, saying, "Every cattle producer across the United States works just as hard as one another. As a young leader in the Angus community, I recognize it as my duty not only to promote the breed, but also the values and individuals behind it."

What's next for Driscoll? She's currently serving as the Iowa FFA state secretary and attending Des Moines Area Community College as she pursues a degree in agricultural business. Driscoll hopes to use her passion for the Angus breed and her skills in communication to make a positive impact on the beef industry.

The Auxiliary offers a \$2,200 scholarship to help her achieve those goals.

Madalyn Carpenter



A leader, industry advocate and all-around cattlegirl, Madalyn Carpenter says growing up

surrounded by agriculture is something she will always be grateful for.

Carpenter calls Wadesboro, N.C., home, and has been a member of her state junior Angus association for the last 12 years. In that time, she has held leadership positions including reporter, treasurer, secretary and her current role of vice president.

She's also spent years in the show ring and helping with her family's registered Angus herd.

"The discipline, resilience and problem-solving skills I have gained from the cattle industry will help me navigate challenges, work efficiently with others, and continue to grow personally and professionally," Carpenter says. "While farming can be unpredictable, it has prepared me to face adversity with confidence and determination in any career I pursue."

Her dreams for the future include returning to her home county of Anson and opening a mobile veterinary clinic. The nearest large animal clinic is more than an hour away from her family's farm, so she knows how difficult it can be for farms to obtain assistance when needed.

Carpenter says her way to finding that path has been in no small part thanks to her time in the NJAA. Attending leadership conferences like Raising the Bar and Leaders Engaged in Angus Development

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(LEAD) have introduced her to agricultural professionals and shown her new sides of the industry. A tour of a meatpacking facility is where Carpenter solidified her passion for the production side of the beef industry.

The Auxiliary awards her a \$2,100 scholarship.

Aubrey West Herbers



Aubrey West Herbers, Lynchburg, Va., has a deep appreciation for everything the Angus family has given her.

She's served in numerous leadership roles in the Virginia Junior Angus Association, found success in the show ring and met a community of people who share her love for cattle.

"The Angus breed has given me more than a place in the show ring," Herbers says. "It has given me a purpose rooted in leadership and service."

She wants to make sure the breed remains a place for young people to find where they belong, which is one of the main reasons Herbers stepped up into leadership in the first place.

"I see a lot of myself in the younger members, and that drives me to show up for them the same way others once showed up for me," she explains.

Herbers says a life in the cattle industry has taught her not just how to work, but why the work matters. More than anything, it has shown her that character matters in every space she walks into, and the importance of having strong values as a guide. In an industry built on trust, reputation and consistency, Herbers aspires

to be known for her honesty and intentionality.

As she considers what's next, Herbers plans to attend Oklahoma State University and study agricultural business, with the ultimate goal of returning home to help grow her family's Angus operation.

"I have never seen my future as simply working in the beef industry; I see it as carrying it forward," she says.

To assist her on this journey, the Auxiliary offers Herbers a \$2,000 scholarship.

Blane Smith



Five generations deep, Blane Smith's involvement in the Angus breed is something that undoubtedly

runs in his veins. His family's registered Angus operation, Smithland Angus in Russell Springs, Ky., dates back to the 1940s.

Smith says that foundation shaped his desire to be involved in the NJAA and Kentucky Junior Angus Association, where he has held a variety of offices.

He's learned that leadership is a skill built through consistency, work ethic and the ability to follow through on responsibilities that contribute to the success of something larger. The NJAA has introduced Smith to breeders from across the country, which helped him realize the value of adaptability and a willingness to learn.

If you ask Smith, the biggest challenge facing the beef industry today is not how cattle are raised, but how little most people understand about the care, commitment and standards breeders hold fast to.

He says, "As a younger Angus breeder, I believe our responsibility is to not only raise quality cattle, but to represent the truth of our industry with confidence and integrity."

This fall, Smith began his next stage of life, attending Somerset Community College to pursue a business degree. The close proximity of the college to his parents allows Smith to remain involved in the day-to-day operations of the ranch, and he plans to use that to focus on improving efficiency, profitability and long-term sustainability of the operation.

To help Smith achieve his goals, the Auxiliary awards a \$2,400 scholarship.

Cohen Navinsky



Cohen Navinsky has been showing cattle since he was 6 years old, and what started as a childhood hobby has

turned into a lifelong passion.

"Where do I even start?" he says. "Almost everything in my life circles back to being involved in the cattle industry."

Navinsky is an active member of the NJAA and the Kansas Junior Angus Association, where he has held numerous leadership positions. Both organizations have been instrumental in making him the young man he is today.

"Serving as a membership director, district director, treasurer, secretary, and as a voting delegate at the 2025 National Junior Angus Show has challenged me to organize, communicate and lead effectively," Navinsky says. "These experiences taught perseverance, accountability,

and the value of mentorship lessons I carry into every aspect of my life,”

Through the years involved in *The Business Breed*, he's grown from competitor into mentor, a transition that has made Navinsky all the more grateful for the relationships he's made and people he's met along the way.

“The Angus breed represents far more than quality cattle; it represents a network of hardworking families, mentors, and young leaders committed to agriculture and supporting one another,” He says.

As he considers his options for the future, Navinsky wants nothing more than to stay in the lifestyle that raised him, owning and operating his own cow-calf operation. To reach that goal, he plans to attend Kansas State University and major in animal science with a focus on beef reproduction.

The Auxiliary awards Navinsky a \$2,300 scholarship.

Garrett Sanders



They say everything is bigger in Texas, but Garrett Sanders says if there's one thing his time in the NJAA has taught

him, it's the value of relationships in a small industry.

“The agricultural industry may seem big; but in all honesty, it is pretty small,” Sanders says. “We never know what the future holds, who might be your future employer or who you might need in times of emergency.”

Besides the value of relationships, the O'Donnell native says growing up on his family's ranch has taught him the value of a good work ethic, and

how important it is to care about the little things. Success is built one day at a time, he says, and consistently caring about the small details can bring success in both the show ring and life.

Sanders cares about upholding the values he was raised with — integrity, work ethic, and land stewardship are foundational principles for him. As he prepares to end his time in the NJAA, he hopes he can be a mentor to other young members, encouraging them to live by these principles as well.

“I want to be someone young Angus breeders can look to as a mentor and someone who stands with traditional personal values,” he explains.

Sanders plan post-high school is to attend college, after which he hopes to continue farming and raising high-quality Angus cattle. He has other interests he wants to pursue too, building and selling wild hog traps and serving with the volunteer fire department.

To help him on this journey, the Auxiliary awards Sanders a \$2,200 scholarship.

Tucker Bayer



From member, to board of directors, to president most recently, Tucker Bayer has held a lot of leadership positions

during his time in the Wisconsin Junior Angus Association. Presidency is a goal the junior from Ringle, Wis., had been striving towards, and he's excited to see how his leadership can influence younger members and increase participation in the organization.

Bayer believes leading by example is one of the most important things a person can do, and he hopes young members see him as someone who lives that out in his herdsmanhip and sportsmanhip both in and out of the show ring.

“The Angus industry has shaped me into who I am and how I lead,” Bayer says.

Aside from his leadership roles within the breed, Bayer has been all over the country exhibiting Angus cattle with no small degree of success. Traveling to shows all the time has its challenges, Bayer says, but he believes it's all worth it.

“Balancing school, sports, extracurricular activities, and showing cattle is no easy task, but it has taught me valuable skills that extend far beyond the classroom,” he explains. “Time management, responsibility and hard work are part of my daily routine.”

Upon graduating high school, Bayer plans to attend Lincoln Land Community College to major in animal science. His exact career choice is still something he's figuring out, but there's no doubt in the young cattleman's mind the Angus breed will be a part of it.

To help him as he pursues this path, the Auxiliary offers Bayer a \$2,100 scholarship. 