

NJAA Can Be Career

Past directors share experiences and advice.

by Barb Baylor Anderson, field editor

When Kara (Wilson) Lee visited the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) office during her 2006-2008 tenure as a director for the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), little did she know she was getting a preview of her future. The Indiana native and now Kansas-based supply programs manager has been working for CAB since graduating five years ago from the University of Kentucky. She has a degree in agricultural communications and leadership.

"I started with CAB three weeks after graduation. This is a dream job for me. It is very rewarding to work with licensees and deliver the message of Angus breeders," she says. Lee's job involves working with people along the supply chain, from cow-calf producers to packers to foodservice industry personnel, to increase the supply of beef that qualifies for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand.



► Indiana native and now Kansas-based supply programs manager Kara (Wilson) Lee has been working for CAB since graduating five years ago from the University of Kentucky.

Job preparation

"Being an NJAA director prepared me for this job. It was the first leadership role I had where I interacted with peers and with adults to improve my skills for the workplace," she says.

To prepare for future careers, Lee encourages NJAA members to step outside their comfort zones and meet new people. She also suggests members broaden their knowledge by getting involved with an aspect of the Angus industry that is different from what they know.

"You have the opportunity to meet people from all over the country and learn their roles in the business. Always maintain that

personal engagement," she says. "If you pursue a career within the cattle industry, you'll be well-versed in many aspects of the business and more marketable."

Casey Jentz, NJAA director for 2004-2006, shares similar thoughts. Jentz is the new American Angus Association regional manager for Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.

"Being on the NJAA board helped

me develop great relationships with other producers from across the nation. I had the chance to be on a team that allowed me to expand my planning, organization and leadership skills," says Jentz, who is from Wisconsin. "Now I implement programs and represent the Association at various events to promote the Angus breed."

After serving, Jentz completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) in animal science. He also worked for

several producers to prepare cattle for shows and sales. He previously was beef territory manager for Animart and managed Markhardt Land & Cattle.

"You never know when you will meet someone who could have a huge impact on your future. I met some of the most influential people in my life from participating on the NJAA board," he says. "Your career should be about doing what you love, and that is what I am doing."

Such is the case for Chad Cash, who was a director representing Pennsylvania on the 1986-1988 National Junior Angus Board (NJAB). He graduated from Penn State in 1988, and has spent his entire career with Purina/Land O'Lakes in various

positions and working in different geographies.

"Find your passion," Cash says. "I have enjoyed the many



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responsibilities I have had. Today, I sell everything from zoo feeds to beef feeds in Pennsylvania and Maryland, and I get to work with the beef business in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, which is my passion."

Cash is sharing that philosophy with his daughter, who recently graduated from high school. He encourages her

and other juniors to take advantage of the opportunities available through the NJAA.

"I was on one of the early boards, and we had little budget. But that helped us learn to prioritize activities and gain organization skills that I continue to use in my job today," he says. "To stand out, you need to push boundaries. Set yourself apart by running for the board, and see the role as a commitment. You will learn a lot of skills you probably wouldn't learn as a new employee."

Jennifer Carrico, an NJAB director in 1992-1994, believes she has the best of two worlds. She maintains an Angus cow herd in

Iowa and is a field editor for the *High Plains Journal*.

"I can trace some cows back to heifers I showed at NJAA events. It's now enjoyable to watch my children raise and show cattle on my family's century farm," she says. "I love my job, too, because I get to write about farmers and ranchers and what is important to their operations, as well as help inform them about important happenings in agriculture. I work from home, which allows me to raise my kids and cattle on the farm."

Carrico has a bachelor's degree in animal science from Iowa State



Springboard



► Jennifer Carrico, an NJAB director in 1992-1994, believes she has the best of two worlds. She maintains an Angus cow herd in Iowa and is a field editor for the *High Plains Journal*.

University (ISU) with a minor in journalism/mass communication. She wanted to be a veterinarian, but after involvement with the NJAB and other organizations, she chose communications as her career path.

“Other directors I served with are everything from a medical doctor to a veterinarian, a teacher to a financial advisor, a rancher to a nurse, and a journalist to a government official. While each of us has separate careers, we all have that common bond of Angus cattle,” she says. “I would advise junior members to find common bonds with others and share the agricultural message.”



► Today Cara (Pascalar) Ayres is senior partner in Take Two Productions LLC and owns “Cara Bout Ag,” which specializes in ag entertainment and fundraisers. She also helps with marketing for Million Ayres Management, and lends a hand at Ayres Angus with her husband.

Agriculture ambassadors

Mark Kreul never anticipated he would end up in Los Angeles sharing the agricultural message once he completed his education and was working in the beef industry. Originally from Wisconsin, Kreul was a member of the 1982-1984 NJAA board. He has a bachelor’s degree in animal science from UW–Madison, a master’s degree from ISU in meat science and a doctorate in food science and biochemistry from Oklahoma State University.

“There is a big disconnect between rural and urban areas. Experience with NJAA can help bridge that information gap on such topics as nutrition, humane animal treatment, sustainability and

beef quality,” says Kreul, who as manager of food safety for In-N-Out Burger handles issues that include regulatory affairs, quality assurance, sanitation, and research and development in the company’s labs. He previously worked for IBP and the Smithfield Beef Group.

“I encourage members today to look at the big picture. Angus genetics contribute so much for the beef industry and create opportunities for the next generation,” he says.

Kreul adds that while leadership and communication are essential skills and fundamental to career responsibilities, he also learned perseverance through his NJAA experience.

“I ran three times for the board before I was elected. I was so dedicated to the Angus industry, and grateful to be part of the organization that helped me prepare for the future,” he says.

Cara (Pascalar) Ayres uses her NJAA background and

NJAA alum career tips at a glance

- Do what you love.
- Maintain personal engagement. Don’t rely strictly on social media.
- Meet new people. You may meet someone who could have an impact on your future.
- Find common bonds with others.
- Broaden your knowledge base by getting involved with something new to you. Push yourself into places that make you uncomfortable.
- Stretch boundaries to set yourself apart. Take risks and work outside the box.
- Be willing to reinvent yourself if needed. Persevere.

experiences to connect with consumers, as well. Hailing from Oregon, she was on the

1991-1993 NJAB. Ayres received her bachelor’s degree in animal science and master’s degree in agriculture from Oregon State University. She was part of the agriculture science faculty at Linn-Benton Community College, where she taught classes, advised students and coached the livestock judging team.



► “Experience with NJAA can help bridge that information gap on such topics as nutrition, humane animal treatment, sustainability and beef quality,” says Mark Kreul, who is manager of food safety for In-N-Out Burger.

“Through NJAA, I was introduced to many great people who were positive thinkers and willing to attempt new things for the betterment of the membership,” she says. “Being involved in NJAA expanded my perceptions of life’s possibilities. Once that happens, you think bigger, dream bigger, and, in my case, are willing to take

risks and work outside the box.”

Today Ayres is senior partner in Take Two Productions LLC and owns “Cara Bout Ag,” which specializes in ag entertainment and fundraisers. She prepares custom-made musical comedy for corporations or organizations, and includes ag literacy as part of the acts. She also helps with marketing for Million Ayres Management, and lends a hand at Ayres Angus with her husband.

“My advice is to push yourself into places that make you uncomfortable, like speaking in front of large groups,” she says. “Be willing to reinvent yourself if needed. If you have a great idea, then do it with your own two hands. You are the one you’ve been waiting for. Stand back up more than you get pushed down, speak your truth, be of service to others and spread joy.”



Editor’s Note: A former National Junior Angus Board member, Barb Baylor Anderson is a freelancer from Edwardsville, Ill.