

Creative Communication

Juniors use imagination in winning creative-writing entries.

compiled by *Kasey Brown*, associate editor

Communication and imagination are two things that go together like chocolate and peanut butter. Both are good on their own, but together, they are even better. Three National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members combined creativity, writing skill and Angus cattle to win the NJAA Creative Writing Contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Indianapolis, Ind., July 6-12.

Co-sponsored by the NJAA and the Events and Education Department of the American Angus Association, the writing contest is designed to encourage the enhancement of written communication skills while providing another opportunity for NJAA members to compete prior to the NJAS. Entries were due May 15 and evaluated prior to the NJAS.

Junior entrants were asked to write an essay between 300 and 500 words in first-person format describing the first week in the life of a

newborn calf. Intermediate entries used 600-800 words to explain what piece of show equipment or supply they would be and why.

Senior entrants used 1,800-2,000 words to answer the prompt: Choose a career path within the American Angus Association or any of its affiliates [Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), Angus Productions Inc. (API), Angus Foundation, Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI)] and describe why you would choose that position.

Contest victors were Abigail Greiman, Perry, Iowa, junior division; Heidi Tremaine, Oconomowoc, Wis., intermediate division; and Maci Lienemann, Princeton, Neb., senior division. See the photos with this story for those placing second and third in their respective divisions.

Here are the winning entries.



A Calf's First Week

by *Abigail Greiman*, junior winner

'OK, I'll see you later!" Hello reader. You just caught me at the end of a game of tag with a couple of my friends, Carissa and Sasha. Let me introduce myself. I am Bridget, a week-old Angus heifer calf. I love playing with my friends and running under the electric fences here at the farm where I live. But I wasn't always able to run around like this. Let me take you back to my first steps ...

It was a marvelous day when I came into the world — a sunny, slightly breezy, very warm mid-March day. I took my first wobbly steps about half an hour after I was born. I was still covered in afterbirth and ravenously hungry. My mom kept telling me to get up, nudging me and mooing at me. I finally stood up after many failed attempts. Then it was time to eat. I nosed my mom in the brisket, but finally found her udder. It was beyond wonderful — warm, creamy and deliciously sweet. That made me stronger. I was able to walk around a little more, but I

still rested a lot in those first few hours. The next day, I was able to walk without stumbling as much, but I was still weak and not prepared to meet the world. I continued to work on my walking skills and by the end of Day 2, I was kicking up my heels in the pen, ready for more space.

I got my wish. The next morning, my mom and I were moved to a small lot with two other cow-calf pairs. These turned out to be Carissa and Sasha and their moms. We got acquainted, and within the hour, we were running spastically around the pen, our moms constantly telling us to calm down. We didn't. Running for the first time was too incredible, even if we were a little uncertain and very wobbly. Over the next few days, we became better friends. We became more and more rowdy, until our mothers were too exasperated to tell us to stop.



Abigail Greiman

On Day 5, our owner moved us to a pasture with more cow-calf pairs. As soon as we could, Carissa, Sasha and I were on the move, running thrilled laps around the pasture, kicking and bucking, tails up. That night, all three of us flopped down, utterly exhausted. In the morning, we woke up fully recharged. That was when we found out that we could run under the electric fences into another pasture with the older calves or to an empty field we had all to ourselves. It was our favorite thing to do

because it was fun and because it annoyed our moms so much. They kept mooing at us loudly, standing guard by the fence until we came back to our pasture.

Well, that brings me back to the present. I hope you enjoyed my first week. I sure did!

Not Just a Stick

by Heidi Tremaine, intermediate winner

When I think about all of the equipment that goes into preparing a heifer for the big show, making a decision as to which one I would be is a rather daunting task. Do I want to be the sweet-smellin', glossy-coatin' final bloom that is essential to that sought-after showring shine? Or what about a powerful, hair-poppin', dirt-bustin' blower that not only works great on my heifer's hair, but also comes in handy when it is time to clean the exhibit or dry my jeans that got soaked at the washrack? But wait, what about the showstick? It is the easiest thing to forget, and it is the only item that does not fit in the show box, but it has a plethora of uses and it is extremely diverse. Therefore, I would choose to be a showstick.

The basic purpose of a showstick is obvious; a showman uses it to set the animal's feet and to rub the belly to keep the animal calm. But the uses proliferate when you think about all of the other things that a showstick can help you with. There is not a better time-passing activity than drilling the point of your showstick into the ground and swiveling your hands back and forth on the handle to create uniform circles in the dirt of the makeup area.

In the ring, when your animal decides to do their duty in the lineup and you need to perform a quick tail pull and loin push, the showstick is there for you. The showstick is also great when your heifer is darting across the ring and you need to give her a quick "thwap" to remind her which speed to travel at. When the animal in front is being stubborn, the showstick can be used to give them a quick jab in the thigh so that you can walk fluidly behind. Everyone has been in a class where an animal escapes, but no worries, with the use of a showstick, one can easily lure in the lead and regain control of the heifer. The list of uses is endless, and that is why I would be a showstick.

My dad always says, "When I was your age, we only had one type of showstick. It was a long piece of wood with a nail in the end." Now there are hundreds of varieties to choose from: short, long, shiny, dull, bedazzled handle, rubber grip, tie-dye, camo, titanium or carbon fiber. You name it, they've got it!

The diversity of the showsticks that are offered today is incredible, and there is certainly a color or a style to satisfy everyone.

One may opt to use a bright, or even fluorescent, showstick that is sure to draw the judge's eye as they enter the ring. Others may wish to use a more plain color so that no attention is taken from their animal. Whatever the case may be, there's something for everyone, and that is another reason why I would choose to be a showstick.

It is the showstick's endless list of uses and vast diversity that make it my show supply of choice. For just \$19.95, you can get your hands on a priceless tool that not only helps make your animal look good, but can also complement your own personality. So when you are griping and groaning when you have to turn the truck around just five miles down the road because you forgot your showstick in the corner of the barn, just remember that it is never a show supply that should be taken for granted.



Heidi Tremaine

AGI Position

by Maci Lienemann, senior winner

The Angus Association and all of its affiliates offer multiple career opportunities in almost all facets of the beef industry; my ideal position is the genetic services director of Angus Genetics Incorporated (AGI).

In the next 40 years, we will face the challenge of feeding a global population of 9 billion (2 billion more than our current population). This translates to having to produce as much food as we have since 10,000 B.C., when farming began. While I understand production practices and expansion will contribute to accomplishing this feat, I believe the ability to collect, understand and analyze genetic information will be crucial to meeting the global food needs of the future. My beliefs are further reaffirmed by industry experts, such as Tonya Amen, AGI. In Vance Publishing's 40 Under

40 — Agriculture, Ms. Amen explains, "Genetic improvement is crucial to doubling our food supply."

Role of genetics

As a lifelong beef producer, my future goals and aspirations are greatly influenced by my desire to improve practice, products and policies surrounding the beef industry. In addition to growing and developing my registered-Angus herd, my academic goal is to obtain an advanced degree (Ph.D.) in animal genetics/genomics.

Being a part of my family's first-generation cattle operation, the more my family's business has grown into a full-service seedstock operation, the more I have learned. The cattle

industry is so much greater than feed, care and animal husbandry. Animal science research, genetics and policy matters are paramount to the success of my own cattle operation and, I believe, the betterment of the industry as a whole.

Through my career in livestock genetics, I will be able to combine both of my passions, biology/research and the livestock industry. With my degrees, I intend to advance genetic research within the beef industry. Specifically, I see myself at a research institution and then a national breed association — particularly the American Angus Association — using my skills and knowledge gained through advanced study



Maci Lienemann

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and my practical knowledge as a cattle producer and consumer of genetic information to further the current body of research and related best practices.

According to the American Angus Association, AGI is a wholly owned subsidiary created to provide a channel for development and implementation of new genetic-based selection tools. Within AGI the genetic services director position is focused on bridging the gap between the theory of genetic selection tools and the practical application and utilization by producers. A responsibility of the AGI genetic services director is to help coordinate and facilitate educational/outreach programs and activities for both seedstock and commercial producers (www.angus.org).

As a current producer and customer of AGI services, I have seen the benefits of genetic technology firsthand. My experience with the practical applications of DNA testing/profiling, artificial insemination and embryo transfer and the genetic potential each provides has played a large role in my desire to pursue an advanced degree and career in animal science genetics research.

As part of my herd management, I collect data and keep detailed records. I send my data and records to the Angus Association to be used in the AHIR® (Angus Herd Improvement Records) database. I have been in charge of testing cows/calves in my herd and for my family's larger herd, Lienetics, who may be carriers of genetic defects. Furthermore, I have utilized genetic testing for comprehensive DNA profiles. These profiles allow me to maintain the most complete and accurate evaluation of my animals early in their lives without slaughter and/or multiple progeny, thus making the previously calculated data more reliable and accurate.

Qualifications

My education, experience and career interests are focused on genetic improvements in beef cattle through biotechnology. This summer, I am serving as a research intern at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center. The study I am assisting with focuses on a metagenomics strategy for reduced incidence of bovine respiratory disease complex. This is an example of how I hope to assist in developing and/or improving genetic-based biotechnologies in the future.

Furthermore, I understand the importance of being able to communicate with and educate producers about new technologies that will allow producers early on to make the best breeding/management decisions to be as efficient, profitable and sustainable as possible.

I believe I possess many qualities that would serve me well in the future in the AGI genetic services director position. I am very knowledgeable of Angus cattle and the beef industry as a whole. I am currently and plan to continue to expand my genetic knowledge base. I have a natural ability to communicate with others in a variety of situations, and, finally, I am deeply passionate about genetic research/technology and the Angus business.

According to StrengthsQuest, my top strength is "learner." Being a "learner," I am constantly searching for and absorbing all the information I can, especially on topics I am interested in, such as genetics and Angus. I am able to make the kind of personal connections necessary with new information to maintain that knowledge on a long-term basis and apply it to new situations.

I also understand in order to be a successful Angus producer, it is paramount to stay abreast of industry information (e.g., practical, scientific and political). My dedication to the industry is unwavering.

This is evidenced by the breadth and depth of my knowledge of agriculture, specifically livestock, and my continued pursuit of knowledge on related subjects.

Communication is the key to any outreach position, and particularly as the AGI genetic services director. The ability to clearly articulate a message to large groups, small groups and individuals is a skill I have demonstrated on numerous occasions. I am a recently retired Nebraska State FFA officer, current University of Nebraska–Lincoln Animal Science Ambassador, Nebraska Angus queen and junior president, and, most notably, I am currently serving as the American Angus Ambassador. A great part of my duty in each of these positions is to lead, communicate and relate with others. I was selected for each position due in part to my extraordinary public speaking skills and highly regarded social skills.

I am confident and comfortable when I am in front of large crowds to speak or present, and I am able to effectively articulate my message. Additionally, I am still able to relate to and make personal connections with individuals and smaller groups. These communication skills would be crucial to bridging the genetic technology gap between theory and utilization by producers.

I am motivated by the opportunities within the beef industry, future possibilities, and upcoming innovations in science and technology. My deep-seated desire to be part of the future of the Angus business has been the driving force in my academic career and choice of organizational affiliations. In the future, a position in AGI such as the genetics services director would allow me to utilize my knowledge, skills and talents to further promote the industry I am so proud of and passionate about.



CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST



► Winning first place in the junior division of creative writing is **Abigail Greiman**, Perry, Iowa. Not pictured are **Savannah Page**, Jefferson, Ga., second; and **Lynae Bowman**, Germantown, N.C., third.



► Winning top honors in the intermediate division of creative writing are (from left) **Sara Hatlewick**, Jamestown, N.D., second; **Heidi Tremaine**, Oconomowoc, Wis., first; and **Katie Friederichs**, Walcott, Iowa, third.



► Winning top honors in the senior division of creative writing are (from left) **Maci Lienemann**, Princeton, Neb., first; **Will Pohlman**, Prairie Grove, Ark., second; and **Brooke Harward**, Richfield, N.C., third.

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