



The Jersey Future is Bright with the Next Generation

In 1958, the Board of Directors expanded its programs for youth. Since then, the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) has never looked back and continues to expand and improve on its youth programs each year.

Ours is perhaps the oldest breed youth program in the U.S., dating back to 1917 when Jersey calf clubs were set up across the country. Its modern form—which includes achievement and production recognitions, scholarships, awards for youth shows and judging competitions, the All American Junior Jersey Show plus the Pot O’Gold program—were part of the expanded program in 1958.

Today, there are 3,845 junior members of the AJCA. More than double the number of active adult members. This month’s issue of *Jersey Journal* showcases the latest group of young leaders inspired by the Jersey cow. The achievements of more than three dozen AJCA junior members chronicled in this issue are quite remarkable. It is the juniors themselves who are setting the performance standards higher and higher each year with much support and encouragement from their parents and youth leaders and the incentives of the AJCA youth program. Whether in their adult lives these young people own and operate Jersey dairies or pursue careers in related areas, they hold great promise as tomorrow’s leaders of the association, National All-Jersey Inc., and across all facets of the U.S. agriculture industry.

The beauty of the AJCA program is it develops over time and pushes Jersey youth towards learning a business sense they will need for lifetime success. That aim evolves and culminates with recognition in the national achievement and production contests. It’s also on display each November when the Pot O’Gold sale becomes a teaching tool. Parents and grandparents talk with their children about how to finance that calf they want to purchase. Then, you can spot them looking over and bidding on the heifers, trying to buy a calf that will be the best value for the money invested. The breeding and management lessons continue for two more years as the heifer becomes a

cow, completes her first lactation, and then is ranked against the others that were sold in the same year.

Jersey breeders have always shown unequalled generosity in parting with their best heifers for youth to develop into the foundations of their herds. The direct illustration is in the performance level of the winners in this year’s Pot O’Gold contest, but it’s also evident in the National Youth Production contest rankings listed in this Journal, and every September youth-focused issue going back for decades.

Then, there’s the commitment that has been made to continuing financial support. The original stake of \$11,000 for the national Jersey youth program came from the 1956 (all donation) All-American Sale of Jersey Starlets, and basic program funding has been secured on an annual basis since through the National Heifer Sale. Tax-exempt permanent funds were established for scholarships starting in 1965, growing in both number and fund value to provide over \$50,000 for educational awards this year. The activities touching hundreds of youth at the All American are possible because of annual contributions from breeders, state organizations and allied industry, plus the Maurice E. Core Jersey Youth Fund, and the Pot O’Gold program is self-funding.

Jersey Youth Academy is funded through a 501(c)(3) educational foundation established from proceeds of BW Academy-ET sold at the 2008 All American, the all-donation National Heifer Sale of 2011 and bolstered by continuing contributions and the Cow Pie Bingo fundraiser.

“It behooves all of us to lend every support and encouragement to the youth of our business.”

There are, however, other forms of “support and encouragement” that linger beyond any ribbon or trophy, certificate of achievement, cash award or scholarship check. As you see Jersey youth going about their activities, do pass on words of congratulations with a big smile as they demonstrate good sportsmanship, keep up their records, or do any other good job that is part of their development as young Jersey breeders. Such actions on your part will surely inspire, and after all, “The inspired youth of today are tomorrow’s leaders.”



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