

Involvement the “Chi” for Josh Nelson

by Teresa Wheeler

“Even if you aren’t that great at a contest, you need to participate in all of them, because you might just meet your next best friend standing in line.”

These are the words of experienced junior exhibitor Josh Nelson, of Valparaiso, Neb., to his fellow exhibitors.

At 17, Josh has been participating in AJCA events for 11 years, and he can see the effect the shows and other events have had on his life. It is with conviction that he recommends that all junior members be as involved as possible.

While many young cattlemen and their families can identify that raising cattle and having youth projects can help an exhibitor learn responsibility and a strong work ethic, Josh knows that the variety of contests offered at the National Junior Heifer Show have helped him in many more ways.

Meeting exhibitors from around the country has helped him learn to communicate with a variety of people, making him more open-minded and outgoing in the process. Contests like public speaking and livestock judging have also helped to improve his communications skills, and taught him to speak very directly and effectively. At the same time, other contests have helped him become more creative.

All have taught him both winning and losing with grace, and all have given him the opportunity to meet other exhibitors. Not only that, but squeezing so many contests, along with caring for his show heifers, into the week-long NJHS has undoubtedly taught him time-management.

Time management skills that this young man needs outside of the cattle barn, as well. A recent high school graduate, Josh served as an officer in both his FFA and 4-H clubs, while also competing at the varsity level in both cross

country and track and field.

While attending the 2007 NJHS in Bowling Green, Ky., Josh was elected to the AJCA Board of Directors as the Northwest Region Director. The energetic young man quickly assumed another role, as a Public Relations director for the Board.

Josh hopes to work with many young members during his two-year term on the board. After all, it hasn’t been that long since he was attending his first NJHS, at 11 years of age.

“When I was younger, and attending my first Junior



Josh takes much pride in exhibiting bred & owned animals because it reflects back on the work he has done with his breeding program. At the 2007 NJHS, Josh exhibited the Grand Champion Bred & Owned Chianina female, JDNC Ms Shazam 1CM.

National, I was very nervous. I was nervous about competing and all the different contests, and even about just where to be and when, for all the events."

Josh goes on to explain, "It was the Junior Board members who pushed me to try different contests and that's who I really looked up to. So I decided to run for the Junior Board to pass that guidance and influence on to the younger members. I want to encourage any member to be more involved."

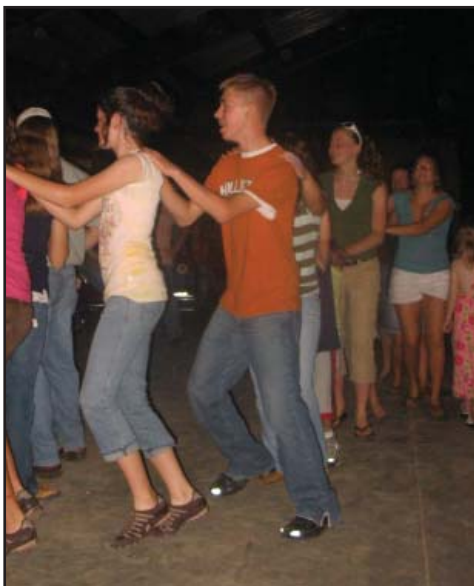
As an AJCA board member, Josh was able to attend the 2008 Youth Beef Industry Congress in St. Louis, Mo., this March. The event brings together young leaders from a variety of breed and state associations to discuss the beef industry as a whole. Participants are able to learn about the opportunities and challenges facing the cattle business.

Josh, along with other AJCA board members, had the opportunity to meet 150 other young breeders and association leaders. During the 3-day event, Josh observed how confident members from each board were in their particular breed. Although he still believes "the Chi breed is the best breed out there," he gained respect for many of the other breeds.

In 2008, the YBIC focused on the variety of career opportunities that are available within the large spectrum of the cattle industry. The event helped solidify Josh's desire to become an embryologist, a field that has long interested him.

"If you think about it, you can have say, five calves, or more, from the same parents, in one year, and really see those genetics. It's really amazing."

In addition, this forward thinking young man knows that as technology in this field continues to expand, there will be a growing need for trained embryologists.



Josh is a big advocate for getting involved in all that the National Junior Heifer Show has to offer, from contests to the fun events, including the dance, like this one at the 2006 NJHS in Louisiana.

In the fall, Josh plans to attend Northeast Community College in Norfolk, Neb., for a degree in Animal Science with a minor in Agribusiness. In addition to the two fields of study, he has already

signed on to participate on their livestock judging team. Following Northeast Community College, he hopes to follow with embryologist studies at one of the larger universities, namely Kansas State, University of Nebraska – Lincoln or South Dakota State.

Chi Influences

From a Chi family, Josh has been showing Chi-influence cattle since the age of 8. His father has raised Chi cattle most of his adult life and Josh has never looked to any other breed. Now, the shows are truly a family event for the Nelsons, as Josh's 11-year-old sister, Abby, has been participating for about three years.

Since attending his first NJHS at age 11, the 2001 show in Lincoln, Neb., Josh has attended annually, but that national level show is just a small part of his show season.

"Our first show of the year is

Fast Facts

152 - Attendees to the 2008 YBIC (Josh represented the AJCA and Nebraska)

17 - Years of Age

11 - Years Exhibiting Chi's, nearly year round

8 - NJHS Attended (first NJHS was in 2001 in Lincoln, Neb.)

4 - Varsity Letters Received
3 years Cross Country
1 year Track & Field

4 - Offices Held in 2007-2008
FFA: Chapter Treasurer
4-H: Club President
NE Jr. Chi Assoc.: Treasurer
AJCA: PR Director

2 - Show Heifers exhibited in 2008

1 - Breed of Choice: Chi

Immeasurable - Gratitude

"I'd really like a chance to thank Heather and all the ACA staff for their hard work and dedication, all of the board members for their commitment to the breed, and also all of the breeders for making all this possible."

the day after Thanksgiving," Josh explains, "and that show season doesn't really end until Louisville, the next November." Josh estimates that throughout the long season, he and Abby attend a show about every other weekend.

Although they mainly participate in local or regional shows in Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa, they make an effort to attend the larger Chi shows, like the NJHS and the National Show during the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Ky.

Josh enjoys the traveling and going to new places, but he also enjoys returning to the same shows each year, to see old friends. "You make really good friends while showing, people you don't get to see every day at school or whatever, and that's one of the best

parts of going to a lot of the shows."

Typically, Josh exhibits two heifers each year. He tries to choose animals that not only show well in the ring, but that demonstrate the positive Chi traits.

"We're a breed with great females that are productive and broody, with great milk. Their calves excel in muscle mass and grade," said Josh, who expresses his enthusiasm for the breed with conviction.

It's no surprise then, that Josh usually retains his show heifers as the foundation for his cowherd. Or that he prides himself on exhibiting bred and owned animals.



Josh began exhibiting Chi cattle at the age of 8 and has won many awards over the years for his cattle. In 2002 he exhibited this DeBull heifer at the Nebraska Big Red Show and took home Champion Chiangus Female honors as well as Champion Junior Showman.

"When you do well with a bred and owned animal, it makes you feel good. You know that it reflects back on you and not just the animal, but on your breeding program and your work."