

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bryan Painter, bryan.painter@ag.ok.gov, 405-521-6479

Oklahoma is a “good match” for shows

TULSA, Okla. -- The smile on Eric Zimmermann’s 8-year-old face nearly matched the curve of the brim of his cowboy hat as he thought about the question. Zimmermann, who is legally blind, was asked Thursday what he likes most about his Pony Of the Americas mare named Too Blonde To Boogie.

The Lithia, Fla., youth replied, “She sees for me.”

Zimmermann’s story is a sample of what two national shows – the 2015 National Junior Angus Show and the 2015 Pony of the Americas Club National Congress – have brought this week to the Built Ford Tough Livestock Complex at Expo Square in Tulsa. There are countless stories of hard work and support.

The National Junior Angus Show which runs through Saturday, has attracted a near-record number of Angus cattle with 1,200 head being shown. Overall, 35 states are represented by more than 750 exhibitors.

The POAC National Congress, which runs through Friday, has featured more than 3,400 entries, up from 2,800 last year. This year’s show has included about 305 ponies compared to 245 at last year’s show.

Within the numbers and within the competition are a lot of smiles, a lot of support and a love for showing. Jaryn Frey, 17, of Kingfisher is the Oklahoma Junior Angus Association Treasurer and Madelyn Gerken, 15, also of Kingfisher, is the Oklahoma Junior Angus Association Second Vice President. Each talked with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) on Thursday at the 2015 National Junior Angus Show about the commitment that goes into showing and what that has yielded in their lives.

Frey, who will be a senior this year at Kingfisher High School, said that for example, she would get out of school and start right in.

“It’s taught me hard work and dedication,” Frey said.

Gerken, who will be a sophomore at Kingfisher High School, said showing has done the same for her.

“It’s definitely taught me a hard work ethic because getting up at 6 in the morning is not my favorite thing to do on summer days,” Gerken said. “I’m not a very good morning person. It’s definitely taught me how to work with others even when times do get tough.”

That is a quality Gerken said others attending the show have noticed about Oklahomans.

“They love how kind people are, how we treat people on a day- to- day basis and how we are willing to help them out with anything that’s going on,” Gerken said.

At the 2015 Pony of the Americas Club National Congress, Eric’s mother Brittany Zimmermann, said it is about a 22-hour trip for them to the show from the Tampa area, but “it’s so worth it.”

“Coming here, there is so much for the kids to do, we’re here almost 14 days,” she said. “The people here are friendly, everyone has been helpful. We love coming here and we hope they are going to keep it here for the next few years. We’ve been all over the country, but we like coming here.”

Eric and Too Blonde To Boogie have already combined to win two titles this week. He is the Congress Champion in the 9 & Under Boys Hunter Under Saddle and 9 & Under Boys Hunt Seat Equitation.

“She is just amazing, you see her take care of him,” Brittany Zimmermann said of Too Blonde To Boogie . “He has no idea that he has a disability. He’s just goes about life like it’s normal. He amazes everyone.”

While the Pony of the Americas Club National Congress is in the second year of a three-year commitment in Tulsa, the National Junior Angus Show moves annually. But officials of both shows talked about how much contestants and families enjoy the shows in Oklahoma. Crystal Albers, director of communications for Angus Productions, Inc., said this is a show that is a few years in the making and the members from Oklahoma have put a lot of effort into it “and that is a big part of the reason for its success.”

“It’s a great location, but it’s also the great people behind the show who have made it possible,” Albers said.

Joyse Banister, CEO of the National POAC, said their membership comes to Tulsa from throughout the nation, so Oklahoma is a good geographical location. But it’s more than that.

“Oklahoma is a really good match,” she said, “because most of them are agricultural based. So it’s a good match for us.”

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Photo caption: Eric Zimmermann and his horse Too Blonde To Boogie show their awards as Congress Champion in the 9 & Under Boys Hunter Under Saddle and 9 & Under Boys Hunt Seat Equitation.

