Face it. We are getting older, day by day. Some of us look to our next career move, others look for the hypothetical relaxation that is called retirement. Wherever you are in your life at this moment, take a second and look at your son or daughter, grandchild, or the youngster next door. They are individuals who will lead the next generation. Have we prepared them for all they will experience?

Those young adults who are now looking to the “real world” for success, achievement, and a new life have a head start on the rest of their peers, if they grew up in the dairy industry. Amongst our youth is the future president of the Ayrshire Breeders’ Association, the future manager of a large dairy, or a top executive. Whatever our children explore in their future, they began with a solid foothold in life, the Ayrshire Youth Program.

The following five individuals tell of how the Ayrshire cow and breeders helped them to strive to reach the goals they have set for themselves.

Teresa Lawton
Terri was the 2000 Outstanding Ayrshire Youth.

Being involved with Ayrshires shaped who I am. The memories of showing, quiz bowls, and receiving the Outstanding Ayrshire Youth award are some of my fondest. Experience with Ayrshires gave me a strong background in dairy which brought me to Purdue where I studied Agricultural Communications and Animal Agribusiness.

At Purdue I was active in the dairy club and on the dairy judging team. The most influential people in my professional career have been the faculty in Purdue’s Department of Agricultural Communications and the Animal Science Department. Judging developed my confidence and public speaking skills, writing for the University developed my professional skills.

Personally, my strongest supporters have been my parents, Ed and Nancy. I’m also thankful for the support and encouragement I’ve received from the Covey Family.

After graduating from Purdue, I enrolled in the Americorps*VISTA program. VISTA is similar to Peace Corps. It is a volunteer program founded to help reduce poverty. My assignment brings me to Billings, Montana where I am developing a fundraising program to increase the availability of free Legal Services to low-income Native Americans. In December, when my service term ends, I will be returning to Massachusetts to help my parents with the farm. I’ve also accepted a full-time position with the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture where I will help with Bio-terrorism readiness.

Tami Mueller
Tami was the 2001 National Ayrshire Princess.

I am doing well at UW-Madison’s School of Veterinary medicine, where I’m a first year student. I missed seeing and talking to everyone at the World Dairy Expo, but I send my congratulations to everyone who did well this year.

I’ve always wanted to be a veterinarian for as long as I can remember, except for a few childhood moments of wanting to be like the cartoon superheroes (but I can guess everyone has had moments like that, then you find out it isn’t possible). However, my experiences with Ayrshires have helped me along the road to getting where I am today. Through my involvement I have overcome my inherent shyness (I know that it is hard to believe), and been in the spotlight enough now to be semi-comfortable there. Also, I’ve met so many wonderful people who have supported me in everything that I do (I’m hoping that you know who you are because I don’t think that I have room enough to mention all of you here).

I would also like to send thank you’s out to all of the adults active in making sure the juniors have such wonderful activities to participate in. Without their time and effort the juniors program wouldn’t be as outstanding as it is. For me that might just mean that I wouldn’t be where I am at today.

I hope to get to Ayrshire activities in the future and look forward to seeing and catching up with everyone there.

Eric Stanton
Eric was the 2001 Outstanding Ayrshire Youth.

I am Eric Stanton of Cobleskill, N.Y. where I am presently graduating from SUNY Cobleskill College with a two year degree in Dairy Animal Science. My future plans are to go into farming on our family farm with my parents John and Debbie Stanton of Stan Ayr Farm.

My love for dairy cattle began at an early age. Since the beginning of my career it was the Ayrshire breed and working with registered Ayrshires that impacted me for many activities and goals. The past 15 years of working with Ayrshires through my great 4-H career has allowed me so many opportunities. During that time, I have judged and shown dairy cattle at all levels of competition to include winning state and national shows. This past year, I received my third Junior All-American class winner to go with my other Reserve and Nomination recognitions.

The experience of working with Ayrshires, the Ayrshire breeders and the people I have met has opened many avenues and has allowed me many connections across the state and country. Over the past few years, I have learned a lot and sharpened many skills to help lead me into the future of dairy farming.

At Stan Ayr Farm today, we have 120 Registered Ayrshires and 130 Registered Holsteins. At the present time, I own 50 animals and plan on expanding and developing an outstanding registered herd of dairy cattle. I am very proud to be a dairy farmer today and part of the Ayrshire breed. My experiences throughout the years have helped me to be confident in making a choice in dairy farming and the Ayrshire breed for my future life.

Stevie Smith
Stevie was an active member of the Junior Ayrshire Association.

As a second year veterinary student at Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, I always feel incredibly grateful to have one important advantage over my classmates. While other students struggle to choose classes,
internships and career paths, I am fortunate in knowing that the only career I have ever wanted and worked towards was to be a bovine practitioner. I knew this when I was a little girl drawing pictures to put up in our sick cow pens on our family’s Ayrshire farm in New Hampshire. I knew this when I spent hours studying for 4-H dairy quiz bowl or was participating in dairy judging. And I knew this when I left home to study dairy science at Cornell University as an undergraduate.

My family has not always owned a dairy and I did not grow up in an agricultural area of New Hampshire. It would have been easy to sway me to a different path, but I was never able to separate my goals or my heart from the dairy industry. From 1986 to 1998 my family did not own or operate a dairy, but we were always busy showing Ayrshires, attending conferences, and keeping busy with our 4-H dairy program. My parents, Brian and Judi Smith, draw tremendous pleasure from working with Ayrshires and the people the breed has introduced to our family. As the fifth generation to work with the breed, the enjoyment these animals have brought our family was contagious to both my brother Zachary and I.

The opportunities, travel, and friends my work with cattle has afforded me with have helped me develop as an individual and created a strong work ethic and sense of pride in this work. My 4-H and Ayrshire youth dairy bowl, judging, and showing activities were incredibly important in helping me gain acceptance into the undergraduate program. While attending college, I studied abroad in New Zealand, where fellow Ayrshire breeders generously showed me their dairies and their hospitality. And it is all these opportunities that have helped me get to where I am today. I never just walked away from an event or competition with a ribbon; there was always a new person to be introduced to, a new skill to be developed, and an old skill to be mastered.

Veterinary school is not easy, and it is not always fun. I am so fortunate to have a plethora of positive experience and people supporting my hope to become a dairy practitioner, and to have strong determination and a positive attitude towards this work instilled in me by so many role models. Some students believe that their future lies in good grades and high SAT scores. I have learned that it is a desire to follow a path, and the variety of experiences that make this path so important that are most necessary for success.

I would like to thank the Ayrshire breeders who have encouraged my efforts through their friendship and guidance. I would especially like to thank my family, and Linwood and Florrie Huntington (who I consider family) for their constant support, and yes dad, even your “constructive criticism.”

Susan Richardson
Susan was the 2002 Outstanding Ayrshire Youth and the 2003 Scholarship Winner.

Ayrshires have not always been a part of my life, though since 1996 they have had a tremendous influence on my career in the dairy industry. I have been breeding Ayrshires for eight years starting with two baby calves that have branched into nine head that span four generations. Through my Ayrshire projects I have learned the fundamental of sound breeding practices, herd health, genetic advancement, sportsmanship, and the joys, sorrows, and reality of the dairy industry.

Throughout my years as a Junior Ayrshire Member I have participated in many of the activities that the Association has to offer. I competed in the Youth Project Book Contest several years, Ayrshire Quiz Bowl, National Conventions and Sales, the Outstanding Youth Contest, the Scholarship Contest, and served as both the Pennsylvania (1997-1998) and National (1999-2000) Ayrshire Princess. Through Ayrshire activities I have gained competence in many areas of life. Taking advantage of the youth contests enabled me to utilize and sharpen my skills, gain public speaking and people skills, meet fellow Ayrshire breeders from across the country, and travel throughout the United States. The culmination of my effort came in being named the National Ayrshire Outstanding Youth in 2002 following a First Runner Up title in 2001. Also, this year I was named the Scholarship recipient.

After high school I pursued a post-secondary education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Farm and Industry Short Course. I received a certificate in Dairy Herd Management while being active on the school Dairy Judging Team, serving as class Vice-President, receiving two WALSAA Activity and Leadership Awards, and maintaining Deans List Academic Standards. I am now residing in Brillion, Wisconsin, where I am Hensman for an 18-cow dairy. My involvement in the Ayrshire Association has given me the skills and courage to pursue my dreams of being actively involved in the dairy industry. Ayrshires have helped shape my life and provide life-long rewarding experiences.