AOA Youth Committee Minutes
January 12, 2026

Committee Members:	Alan Siktberg ✔	Dena Drago (Secretary)
	Laurel Shouvlin ✔	Nancy Chapel
	Staci Forshee ✔	Dianna Timmerman
	Stephanie Glyptis	Bonnie Kittrell (Chair) ✔
	Cadence Rearden	

Staff Liaison: Claryssa Sladek ✔

Board Liaison: Gina Glasscock ✔

Meeting: Virtual Committee Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026
8:00 PM Eastern Time/5:00 PM Pacific Time/7:00 Central

1.0 Call to Order / Opening Remarks **Bonnie**

1.1 The committee discussed the need to clean up their roster of members who don't attend meetings, which has been preventing them from reaching quorum for official votes and business.

1.2 Claryssa proposed sending a form to committee members to confirm continued interest in participating and to determine optimal meeting times that would work for more members.

1.3 The committee determined they should have 10 active members (minus Ann who is likely inactive), with a quorum of 5, which they had present at this meeting to help with future decision-making.

2.0 Youth Outreach Models: 4-H, FFA, and Volunteer Engagement

2.1 Alan, who works with FFA (Future Farmers of America), expressed his goal of getting alpacas and camelids included in FFA judging and competitions to generate more youth interest.

2.2 A proposed solution is to partner AOA with local affiliates to create coordinated educational events across the country that combine youth activities, fleece shows, and

educational components rather than trying to organize separate events with limited resources.

2.3 The committee agreed to document successful event models separated by type (fleece show, performance show, halter show) to accommodate different affiliate needs and youth interests.

2.4 Youth education should focus on confirmation, breeding attributes, and fleece value to encourage understanding of alpacas as livestock, typically scheduled for Sunday mornings at shows.

3.0 Marketing and Barriers to Youth Participation

3.1 Betzy emphasized that youth marketing requires different platforms than those used for adults. While parents might be on Facebook, youth are primarily on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Discord, and text messages.

3.2 Marketing for youth programs requires a dual approach targeting both parents and children. Betzy noted that parent enthusiasm significantly impacts youth retention in programs.

3.3 Major barriers to mentor farm involvement include time constraints, lack of equipment (like obstacles for performance events), insurance issues for leasing animals, and challenges with youth commitment and follow-through.

3.4 Youth transportation to farms and practice attendance were identified as significant obstacles to program success, particularly for youth who don't live on farms.

3.5 Several members noted that COVID significantly impacted youth programs, with people only now starting to get motivated again and return to these types of activities.

4.0 Mentor Farm Participation & Support

4.1 Alan emphasized the need to entice breeders and farms to recognize mentorship as an important investment. The group acknowledged this initiative had started previously but hadn't gained sufficient traction.

4.2 Laurel suggested creating a detailed description of mentor expectations, including time commitment requirements, before recruiting mentors. She stressed the importance of establishing clear groundwork.

4.3 Betzy proposed developing a certification program for youth handlers who don't own alpacas but could be trained and certified to assist farms at shows. She observed at GWAS that small farms struggled to manage multiple show rings.

4.4 A certified handler program could be implemented to help breeders who need assistance during shows while providing opportunities for youth without their own alpacas.

5.0 Affiliate Engagement and Support

5.1 Bonnie expressed frustration about the committee "spinning wheels" and suggested leveraging state affiliates to implement youth programs, particularly by connecting with local FFA chapters.

5.2 Laurel highlighted that many affiliates are overwhelmed by volunteer shortages and find adding youth programs costly (requiring additional judges), suggesting the committee should provide ready-to-implement models rather than concepts.

5.3 A major challenge identified for all affiliates is the lack of volunteers and funding to support youth programs, including maintaining websites and educational resources.

5.4 The committee discussed the difficulty in attracting attendees to convention-style educational events in the era of webinars and Zoom, suggesting a need for new engagement models.

5.5 Members discussed successful models including the Payoba Youth Invitational and the Maryland Alpaca fleece Show and Youth Invitational that could serve as templates for other affiliates.

6.0 Summary & Adjournment **Bonnie**

Next meeting date **February 9, 2026** .