

Hereford Wish Comes True

Chris Cummings' wish came true on Dec. 2 as he stood in the livestock arena at the 2006 Hoosier Beef Congress in Indianapolis. This 15 year old from Union Mills, Ind., who is battling cancer, was able to show a Hereford steer at the Congress because of a wish granted by the Indiana Children's Wish Fund.

When Chris was in Indianapolis for chemotherapy earlier in the year, Clarian North's Center for Children's Cancer and Blood Diseases staff presented him with the paperwork to apply for a wish, any wish. Most folks wouldn't understand why of all the gifts he could've requested, Chris chose to receive and show a steer, specifically a Hereford steer.

He explains, "I thought it'd be neat to get a steer instead of a video game or something like that. You get a real-life experience out of raising an animal." Chris chose Hereford because he likes the look of the breed and has shown a Hereford steer before at the La Porte County Fair.

Chris tells that the Congress was a whole new experience because of its caliber, with more than 1,400 cattle exhibited. He enjoyed the event with his dad and mom, Tom and Carol, as well as his brother, Tom.

"We had a lot of fun showing," Chris says. "I'd never shown at anything bigger than the county fair." His brother adds, "It definitely helped Chris, and we all enjoyed it too. It took our minds off things." The Cummings family hadn't been able to enjoy a fun weekend together in more than a year.

In addition to the steer, the Indiana Children's Wish Fund gave Chris an aluminum

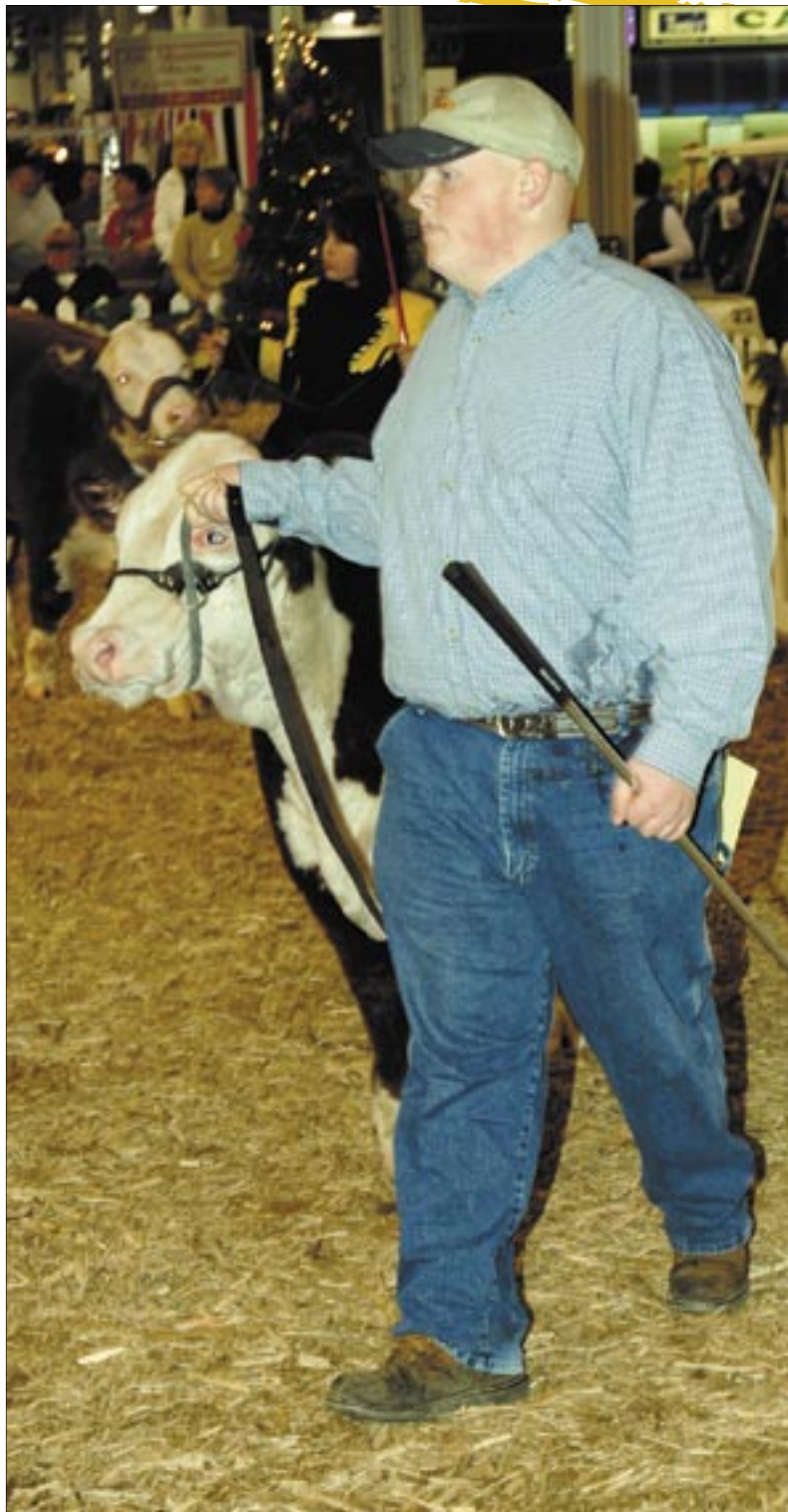
grooming chute, combs, halters and other fitting supplies to make the day complete.

Members of Chris' community also played a large role in the success of his wish. Les Craft, a family friend and rancher in La Porte County, helped acquire the Hereford steer from Larry Vukonich of Joliet, Mont. Les then broke the steer to lead. Neighbor and 4-H leader Dan Youngreen helped with clipping and grooming. More friends — Joy Griffin, Rob Fisher and Dave Ambers — helped with items like transportation and show entries. Joy also gifted a crossbred steer to Chris to add to his 4-H project, and helped him and his brother in preparation for the Congress. The family tells that Joy's guidance helped make this first experience a memorable one for the whole crew.

When all was said and done, Chris' steer stood sixth in its class of 11 at the Congress, and Chris stood by his side, proud of his accomplishment and grateful for those who helped him along the way. "We really appreciate the help and support," he says.

The Hereford steer, Bob, remains at the Cummings farm, and Chris plans to show him at the county fair this summer, and possibly even at the Michigan Beef Expo.

"If people knew what the wish does for a kid, a lot more people would be donors," Carol says. "It's absolutely phenomenal." She explains that when Chris found out about the wish, his chemotherapy went a lot easier, and that now Chris looks forward to feeding his steer each morning. **HW**



PHOTOS BY PHIL REID

The Indiana Children's Wish Fund awarded Chris Cummings, Union Mills, Ind., a Hereford steer to show at the 2006 Hoosier Beef Congress in Indianapolis. From Disney World to shopping sprees to Hereford steers, the Fund is helping medically burdened families celebrate life one wish at a time.



Carol Cummings says Hoosier Beef Congress committee members such as Steve Gunn (left) and Bob Bishop help make the Congress what it is, a wonderful event.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROL CUMMINGS

The Cummings family appreciates the "wish" staff, friends, family and their church family for their support and prayers. Pictured at Tom's graduation in June 2006 (l to r) are: Chris, Tom (dad), Carol and Tom.