

Thank You, It's Been the Best

It's been 1,095 days, three years, or in my case, the blink of an eye. Over the past three years, I have been privileged to serve on the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board. It seems like yesterday Brady and I were running around Grand Island, Neb., looking for khakis and a white dress shirt (which apparently we were supposed to have). Little did we know, our lives were about to change.

Shortly after, I was given the opportunity to fly to Michigan to get to know the board a little bit better and to start working on the future of the Hereford breed. Needless to say, this was an amazing trip and really opened my eyes to the opportunities that were about to come into my life. In the following days, I attended my first PRIDE convention and realized

how amazing my peers in the Hereford breed were.

It didn't take long to realize that these kids were soon to become my best friends. This was the first trip that showed me my best friends don't need to live close by or go to school with me; they can be in a neighboring state or 2,000 miles away. To this day, the kids I met on that trip are the ones I call when I am in the car for 12 hours, which became much more common after I got on the board.

Being on the NJHA board has shown me the country. I have had the opportunity to go to Pennsylvania twice, Nevada, Texas, Montana, and, trust me, the list goes on and on. Days in a car start to feel like just a quick trip to see a buddy at a cow show in Oklahoma.

I have gone from a kid who loved showing Hereford cattle to now being a Hereford enthusiast who is passionate about the breed and the people in it. When I started showing cattle at the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), my good friend Teebz and I drove to Tulsa, Okla., knowing three other people there. Now we have a hard time getting to the washrack without stopping to talk in every aisle. This has shown both of us this isn't just a breed of cattle; it's a family of people that will be in our lives forever.

This summer as my time on the board comes to an end, I am very excited to know that my family will be in Grand Island with me. My niece and nephew are planning on doing pre-peeewee showmanship, my brothers-in-law want to golf, and my sister and Dad will be betting on who does better in the judging contest. My family is ready to take Grand Island by storm for their first JNHE and my last.

Even though my family will be with me my last week on the board, I want to thank my Hereford family for being there with me over the past three years and being so generous to the NJHA. I know my time on the board wouldn't have been possible if it wasn't for people like you helping me along the way.

The biggest thank-you I would like to give is to Amy Cowan, AHA director of youth activities, and Bailey Clanton, AHA youth activities assistant. Not everyone realizes how much these two do not only for the junior board members but for every junior member in the association. Their lives are dedicated to their jobs, and their work shows when the JNHE gets voted the best Junior National of the Year by Best of the Barns.

Thank you again to everyone, and I hope to see you in Grand Island.

— Jason May, NJHA fundraising chair



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My head was in my hands and my body was shaking like crazy. I couldn't look up when the retiring board members walked off the stage during the JNHE in Grand Island, Neb., for the last time and walked to the new owners of the maroon jackets. When I felt the tap on my shoulder, I instantly started crying tears of joy and relief. What I was feeling was a happiness that only comes once in a while. I knew

that it was a special honor to be on the board, but I was about to find out how special. Listening to Eldon Krebs' inspiring speech the next day and looking out at the cattle and the people in the stands, I knew that this was an opportunity of a lifetime, and I couldn't wait for it to start.

The last three years serving on the NJHA board have gone by so fast. I have met so many people and made so many friends that will last

me a lifetime. Not only did the rest of the board members become my teammates, they became some of my closest friends. We stayed up way too late, talked way too loud, and I'm sure that Amy Cowan and Bailey Clanton wanted to ring our necks a couple of times, but these memories are ones for the books.

A responsibility comes with donning the stylish NJHA board apparel. The juniors and the parents depend on us to help put on the best events in the country, and that's not something we take lightly. From early meetings in the boardroom to late nights at the expo centers, we have had our share of blood, sweat and tears. But in those times we have had the privilege of meeting some of the best leaders in the country and some outstanding people.

When I was approaching my first JNHE as a board member in Kansas City, Mo., I was completely overwhelmed. My father had extreme health issues that summer and things were turned upside

down as my mom and I were trying to get everything around for the trip. I was a nervous wreck, but as the week went on, we received so much help from the board members and other families that I was reminded of how much I love my Hereford family. I will be forever grateful for the words of encouragement and help we received that week.

I would also like to thank our advisors who guide us to be not only better leaders but better people. I feel blessed to have them in my life. To the Gobles, McMillans, Copelands and Buchholzs — thank you for taking us in as your “kids” and helping us through these three years. Of course, we wouldn't be anywhere without our fearless leaders Amy and Bailey. They keep us in line but let us come to our own decisions, and they have helped us to evolve into leaders.

And thank you to the breeders, juniors and my Hereford family for putting your trust in me to help lead your industry. The experiences that

I have gained from this opportunity have shaped me into the person I am today.

Thank you to my parents and family. While I am off running errands and tending to board duties, you never fail to get things done. I definitely wouldn't have been able to do this without you. Thanks, Mom, for starching my jeans and khakis, and Dad, for the encouraging words when I needed them the most. You are in this just as much as I am, and I am so lucky to have a support system like that.

In July I am giving away my jacket to another very deserving junior who will take his turn at leading this great association. This moment will be a bittersweet one for sure. The direction that the Hereford industry is heading is exciting, and I cannot wait. Thank you all for the last three years; they've been the best.

— *Elise Hackett, NJHA*
communications chair

