

# Unforgettable Memories

A lot of people outside the cattle industry hear that I serve on the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board and think what a great résumé builder. However, it goes much further than that.

The relationships I've built and places I've gone, and most importantly, the juniors I have helped or impacted is what this experience is truly all about. I have had too many people to name or thank for making me who I am in this industry and being on the board was a great way to give back.

I still remember making my first trip to the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Billings, Mont. As soon as my dad and I got out of the truck and stepped into the barn, I knew this was where I wanted to be. Ever since then, like many other

juniors, I have always looked forward to our family vacation at the JNHE to see my friends from across the states and to also make new friends and memories.

I may have never run for the board if Sue Rowland hadn't given me that extra push and headed me in the right direction from the gate. She always puts the juniors first and guides us into leadership and decision-making roles to develop us into great industry leaders like many past Kansas Junior Hereford Association board members that I've looked up to.

When it came time to apply to be a NJHA board candidate, I thought to myself, "Is this the best fit for me?" Now that my term is coming to an end, I could not imagine it any other way. At that moment when I decided to run I knew I wanted to give back to an organization which provided me so many skills over the years through a wide variety of contests, scholarship opportunities or relationships. It became very clear to me that the people I met through the NJHA will always be here for me.

It's been three years; however, it feels like yesterday I was giving my candidate speech, nervously hoping I got the delegates to think I was a perfect fit to represent the NJHA. I was tremendously excited when Austin Buzanowski handed off his maroon jacket to me. I would have never guessed what close friends

I would become with the other 16 board members I served with.

During this amazing period of serving on the board, I have countless memories that I will treasure forever. These experiences are what being on the board is really all about. This is where I challenge all of you potential candidates to reflect on what the NJHA has done for you and decide if you're up for the challenge to be an NJHA board member and to help our breed reach new heights.

I want to close with saying thank you to everyone who has ever planned for or helped at a JNHE, influencing numerous juniors in countless ways. Also, thank you to my parents, Kirk and Stephanie Jensen, who dealt with me always traveling from show to show and have been there with advice.

I would like to finish with thanking the entire American Hereford Association staff and offering a special thanks to Amy Cowan, Bailey Clanton and all the junior advisors for putting up with me the last three years. Hope to see everyone in Madison, and once again let's prove to the industry who deserves the Best of the Barns Award in regards to junior nationals.



— Cody Jensen, NJHA chairman

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## Inventing Our Future

The summer of 2013 in Kansas City, Mo., was hot, but didn't even compare to one in Georgia. Somehow though, in that arena, it felt like 95 degrees with 80% humidity. My palms were sweaty, my throat felt swollen and I could feel my heart beating in my toes.

Hearing the other awards sounded like a buzz in the distance. I could hear that someone was speaking into the microphone, but I couldn't make out what he was saying. My head was consumed with what would happen afterwards. I knew there

was nothing else I could do; the results were in.

Suddenly Amy Cowan came on the mic. My head shot up. She congratulated the candidates on a wonderful week and nodded to the retirees to go ahead. This was it. One by one the retirees walked to the stands. My father had been hurt earlier in the week, so we had to sit on the front row to keep him from walking up the stairs.

I watched, in terror, as the retirees walked, one by one, up the stairs on either side of me. My heart sank. They were going to the candidates farther up into the stands. I didn't get a position. Just as a tear started to form in my eye, the crowd around me started cheering like crazy.

I looked up to see Matt Woolfolk running down the stands. I didn't know what was happening. He got to the bottom, grabbed my hand and scooped me up into a huge hug. "Let's keep it in the South," he said, as he draped his jacket over my shoulders. My head was spinning. All I could see were familiar

faces and hands all around me. I was now a director of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA).

As the summer of 2016 approaches, this moment is still running fresh in my mind. This was the day that opened up hundreds of opportunities for me that I wasn't even aware of at the time. Being on the NJHA board of directors, I have been blessed with the absolute best support system that I believe has ever been possible.

From my fellow boardies, our advisors, Amy and Bailey, to the entire American Hereford Association staff and board, our team was unstoppable, and I always had someone to turn to. Thank you all so very much.

From the mountains of Colorado to the valleys in Arkansas, I was able to travel all over the country thanks to the board and the juniors who put me here. Though our feet may ache and our stomachs may growl, working the ring and helping at shows have been the highlights of my three years serving, and given the chance, I would happily do it again.

Last, I want to thank my family, which consists of not only blood relatives, but nearly all 50 states of people who have shaped me into the woman who stands before you today. The kindness and advice that you have all given me over the years will be something I hold onto forever; it has honestly changed me. I can't even count how many of you have offered me food, a hand or a shoulder when I needed it most.

This amazing association has such a great power; it's truly inspiring. They say the best way to predict the future is to invent it. I challenge our junior members to do just that. Believe in your industry, believe in your association and believe in yourselves throughout your journey, inventing our future.



— *Tommie Lynne Mead,*  
*NJHA director*