

Shaping Who I Am

As I think back through my career with the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA), it seems as if yesterday I was leading my steer into the ring in Tulsa, Okla., where the very first Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) was hosted. I must have been hooked because I have only missed one since then.

The JNHE has been an event for many families, mine included, which provides the opportunity to see new and different parts of the country with the best people in the world. The relationships I have gained through being a junior member have already been the kind that are hard to find in any facet of life.

Somewhere along the trail of state Hereford junior shows and the JNHE, I grew a desire to help

these organizations. That desire started at the state level, where I participated on the state board of directors with our fearless leader, advisor and mentor, Sue Rowland, who always kept our junior members headed in the right direction while still putting us in the position to develop leadership and decision making skills that are applicable in so many ways.

I later decided to run for a position on the NJHA board. At the time I knew I wanted to give the organization my time because of what the organization has done for me, whether it be scholarship opportunities, skills gained through a wide variety of contests, mentorship by some of the most elite people in the agriculture industry, relationships that last a lifetime or the experiences that I will never forget.

What I didn't know was that being a part of the NJHA board was going to shape me as a person even more. The group I have been fortunate to be a part of for the last three years has been full of different dynamics and great people. I had the opportunity to witness some of the best leaders that the junior program has ever seen and that leadership is what has been vital to our success in the last few years.

Our junior board and the whole NJHA have the best support system in the country and that support starts at the American Hereford Association with the staff and employees that make our organization run smoothly. The junior program and most definitely the JNHE and the Faces of Leadership Conference would not be what they are without the true dedication and passion of our very own Amy Cowan and Bailey Clanton. Finally, to my

fellow "boardies," past and present, all I can say is thank you for the BEST experience of my life; it is an opportunity that will be close to my heart for as long as I live. As I close out my career as a board member, I say thank you to those that made the experience the greatest it could have ever been.

The future of the NJHA is very bright, and I challenge our future junior leaders and members to guide our organization to greater heights. Our junior organization is seen as one that is built around families, relationships and good honest camaraderie amongst great people. We can never lose sight of what has made us great and desired amongst other youth that were not born into the breed as many of us were. The Hereford people truly are the best and most caring a person can ask for. Through my experience as a board member when I was on the road, I always had a bed to sleep in and a hot meal waiting for me, even if I had never had the opportunity to meet those breeders or members before that day.

Finally, I have to thank my family. My parents and brother and sister have dedicated a lot of their time to the junior program and even more with my time commitments with the junior board. They have instilled in me first-class values, and I thank them for the kind of person they have shaped me into. I can't help but mention how much my Kansas Hereford family as a whole has helped me throughout my time as a board member and that encouragement is what the junior program is all about; support, growth and creating a brighter future. Thank you all!

— *Brady Jensen,*
NJHA chairman



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The Broken Water Bucket

It seems like yesterday my fellow oldies and I were in Grand Island, Neb., pacing outside the room where we were about to give our final addresses. Little did we know we were going to have to compare the junior board to a broken water bucket and then, three days later, be elected onto the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors.

What a wonderful past three years it has been. As a board, we have been to South Dakota, Oklahoma, Michigan, Texas and Arkansas, and I would be lying if I said we did not grow close and enjoy ourselves. I consider myself and the 11 other board members a team. We all have our differences inside and outside the boardroom, but when it comes down to it, we all know that we must work together, helping each other, in order to succeed in the tasks given to us.

Now, back to that broken water bucket. I think that the broken-water-bucket analogy can be explained very simply: problems, holes or breaks are going to occur, and we must be able to adjust to the situation and work together to either fix it or simply work with it. This analogy can be applied to more than just the junior board. As we grow up, we are faced with opportunities to work with many people, whether that be family, classmates or coworkers. As many of us know, working with others brings much diversity and can cause conflict or problems with reaching a goal. Life is not easy, and working with others falls right into that difficult category as well. Instead of fighting over spilled water, we need to step back and analyze the situation in order to refill the bucket and fulfill the task at hand.

So I ask all of you to keep on trying; do not give up when the

bucket breaks and leaks — do not allow for things to fall apart when the going gets bad. You must get back up on the halter and keep trying and ask for help when needed. In a junior association like this, help is literally around the corner or down the aisle. Step back and see the big picture. It might surprise you, but it is not always about just you. Learn to be a follower, learn to lend a helping hand and learn to work together to accomplish the small and the big things. This breed and its juniors will never stop doing big things. Never give up, for you are going to do great things.

Working as a board member has been a wonderful experience for me, but it would not have been possible without those who will read this and who have crossed my path along the way. I have learned so much over the past three years, and most of that has come from the juniors, my peers. I have learned humility, courage, and perseverance from even the smallest of showmen that have been in the showring. Some of those little ones probably succeed with these traits better than I do. I cannot thank the people of the Hereford breed enough for simply being themselves and doing what they love.

From your smiles, hugs, meals and gratitude, I could not ask for a better support system to give back to for the last three years as a Hereford junior. It has been an honor to serve as a junior board member for such a solid group of young breeders. I am proud of each and every one of you. From the bottom of my heart, I extend my love toward those I have met

and have yet to meet as I say my farewell to the best of the best, the Hereford breed.

— *Kristen Bielema,*
NJHA membership chair



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