



Chris Stephens, (center) NJHA advisor, presented each retiring director a bronze Hereford statue for their years of service on the NJHA board. Pictured (l to r) are: Kara Eschbach, Katlyn Howes, Stephens, Nicole Starr and Jason Ewing.

Giving Thanks

Retiring junior board members reflect, thank those who've supported them.

by Sara Gugelmeyer

Four young Hereford enthusiasts must say goodbye to their time on the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) Board of Directors, leave their cattle-show-filled youth behind and journey into the "real world." But first, they would like to reflect on this cherished time in their lives and thank everyone who has helped them get where they are today by shaping them into responsible young adults and showing them the way to success.

Kara Eschbach

Kara says she got her start showing Herefords by following in her three older sisters' footsteps. Because her sisters allowed her



Kara Eschbach

to tag along, she began competing in showmanship contests as a 5-year-old.

When it came to her decision to run for the board, Kara says it was somewhat of a spur-of-the-moment decision. "I knew what the board was, and I had always admired the directors, but I didn't really think that I would want to run for it or that I would even get on," she says. Then junior board members Catie Sims and Ashley

Middleswarth approached her about running and changed her perspective. "So it was mainly because of the older board members' encouragement that I wanted to run," she adds.

Kara says her favorite memories of being a board member were the van rides. "Chris would shove all 12 of us, plus our luggage, into one of those little white vans," she says, "and so we had some good times and some rough times in the van but definitely plenty of board bonding."

As for her future plans, Kara isn't completely sure where life will take her. She just graduated in May 2008 from Oklahoma State University with an animal science degree and is considering whether to start graduate school or jump straight into a full-fledged job search. No matter where these decisions lead, she plans to continue to have Hereford cattle in her life. "I don't ever see a place without them," she says, adding, "My nephew is showing Herefords now, so I would say the tradition continues on."

Kara says she would like to thank Chris Stephens and her mom and dad for all of their support throughout her youth. She says she would also like to thank "all the board members before

me for setting such a good example and showing me the way."

Jason Ewing

Jason is no stranger to the Hereford industry; he's a fourth-generation Hereford breeder. He says, "You could say it's in my blood."

He grew up showing Herefords, so when he was old enough to run for the board, he jumped at the chance. "I decided to run for the board because the Hereford people had done so much for me that I wanted to give something back," Jason says. "Plus I love helping younger people reach their goals."

Once Jason decided to run for a position as a director, it wasn't easy to earn his spot. He says he ran for the board three times in a four-year period before finally being chosen.



Jason Ewing

When he finally made it, he didn't stop developing his leadership skills.

After two years as a director, he was elected president. He says, "It just goes to show that if you

set goals and strive to reach them, anything is possible."

Jason says there were many memorable times while being a director, but says, "I would have to say the many 'bonding' moments riding in a van to different PRIDE conferences and spring board meetings take the cake. It is amazing what you learn about people when you are locked in a 16-passenger van for over six hours with them."

Jason earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri in December 2007 and now has returned to work on the family farm. He helps his family manage 160 registered Hereford cows and 150 commercial cows and milk 120 registered Holsteins.

In addition to continuing to help with his family's operation, he would like to start his own embryo transfer business.

He says there are many people who aided in his success in the Hereford industry, "First and foremost is my family; without them I would be nowhere." He continues, "I must also thank all of the Missouri Hereford breeders, along with a few outside of the state, who know who they are, for all of their support over the years."

Finally he says he would like to thank Chris Stephens and all the American Hereford Association (AHA) staff members for their support of the junior association. "It is their foresight that sees the future in our Hereford juniors, and they all go the extra mile to make sure all of the junior shows go off without a hitch."



Katlyn Howes

Katlyn Howes

Katlyn Howes started showing Herefords at age 7, but she'd been around them on her parents' small Hereford farm since birth. She says she became interested in running for the junior board because she always admired the board members as a youngster. "At shows growing up, I remember looking up to the board members and thinking that I wanted to do that some day," Katlyn says. When she was old enough to run for the board, it was not a hard decision. She says, "I wanted to be the role model for younger Hereford juniors that I remembered from when I was little."

Katlyn says she created so many wonderful memories while serving that she can't really pick one. "Getting my jacket was truly one of the proudest moments of my life. But a lot of the moments I'll remember are little things that really stick with me — for instance, helping peewees in showmanship at JNHE (Junior National Hereford Expo) and having them thank you in the barns later on that day or seeing an idea you had in a board meeting become reality." She adds, "It really just makes me feel so happy to be a part of this great organization."

Katlyn plans to continue her lifelong goal of helping youth by becoming a high school English teacher. She is currently studying at Elizabethtown College to do just that.

Although she feels drawn to be a teacher, she still wants to be involved with Hereford cattle as well. She says, "I hope to stay in a place where I can raise my family around Herefords, but who knows what life has in store?"

Looking back on her years as a board member she says she would first like to thank her family for all their support. "I'd like to thank my family, of course — my parents for helping me

stick with cattle for all of these years and my sister for helping to care for my show animals while I was working with the board at shows."

She would also like to thank Chris Stephens for his hard work and dedication to the NJHA. "Also the NJHA board advisors, especially the Hermans and Kottkamps, you've been like second parents at times," she says. And, "Every board member I've served with has truly made an impact on my life and made these three years unforgettable."

Finally, she hopes other juniors will want to follow her example by serving on the board. She says, "I really encourage anyone with a desire to impact others in this industry to step forward and take this awesome opportunity by the horns (or poll). Being a member of the NJHA board requires a lot of work and devotion, but there is no way I would ever take back this experience in a million years."

Nicole Starr

Nicole says Hereford cattle have always been an important part of her life. She was no stranger to hard work as a child and got plenty of practice helping out her parents. She tagged along as her older sister started showing and was thrilled when she could show at her first junior national in 1996. From there, her Hereford enthusiasm continued to grow.

She says when deciding to run for the board, she remembered three main points which had always stuck with her throughout her childhood: "leadership, making a difference and serving others." She says, "I knew that running for the board would allow me to exercise and strengthen these skills. With my past experiences and passion, I knew that I wanted to be a part of the history of this association and serve as a role model to others."

Nicole says her favorite memory of serving on the board was when she was elected and received her jacket. "Little did I know that was only the beginning of thousands of memories that were to come in the three years that followed." And she says she will never forget the Hereford breeders



Nicole Starr

that she has had the opportunity to build relationships with while attending events and working on projects for the NJHA.

Now she is a junior at Michigan State University, majoring in animal science. She is active with Block & Bridle and works at the university's purebred beef barn. But she says, "I am fortunate to be able to spend all of my summers working on my family's Hereford farm."

She would like to thank Chris Stephens. "Chris is one person that I admire for his devotion and countless hours spent toward the junior association. As the AHA youth director, he did everything possible to make my term on the board the most worthwhile and educational experience I have had as a young adult."

She says there have been several people who helped guide her to where she is today. "I feel fortunate to have so many people in my life that look after me and want to see me succeed." She continues, "However I don't think it would have been possible to make all these contacts across the country over the past 20 years without my parents and family. They are the ones that have introduced me to this way of life and have established a foundation for me to build upon. I would like to thank my parents for always believing in me and giving me the determination and drive for me to reach my goals."

Lastly she wants to give a message to both Hereford juniors and their parents. She says to the juniors: "Please take advantage of everything that passes your way; do not be afraid to take a challenge; you never know where it might lead you. The NJHA is filled with opportunities that will benefit you down the road. The anticipation of those benefits is exciting, but know that it is worth the wait and hard work to get there."

And to their parents, she adds: "You need to be credited for your strong will to want to see your children succeed not only in the showing but also in life. We all know that the time away from work and the hours that go into events such as the Junior National Hereford Expo are strenuous. Cattle are what keep most families close; the time you spend together sharing this common interest is priceless." **HW**