

That's a Wrap!



Retiring directors pictured (l to r) are: Justin Bacon, Danielle Starr, Rossie Blinson and Jake Metch.

As the final scene of their terms serving the National Junior Hereford Association comes to a close, these four young leaders reflect on the experiences and memories they've accumulated.

by **Jill Johnson**

After three years serving the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) and its 3,000 members, the retiring members of the NJHA board of directors will soon enter the post-production phase of their journey. But, the skills they've acquired and the people they've met along the way will set the stage for their future roles in the agriculture industry.

As they took their final bows during the banquet Friday, July 15, NJHA directors Rossie Blinson, Danielle Starr, Justin Bacon and Jake Metch recalled many fond memories and offered words of wisdom to juniors of one of the largest youth livestock organizations in the country.

Since 2008 the foursome have traveled the country promoting the organization, planning shows and conferences, and educating youth on the Hereford breed, leaving the NJHA better than they found it.

Although their terms ended in July at the 2011 Junior National Hereford

Expo (JNHE) in Kansas City, Mo., they are excited to take on a new role in the Hereford industry and give back to the organization that has given them so much.



Rossie

Rossie Blinson, chairman

Rossie Blinson credits the NJHA for helping her promote the breed she loves in her home state of North

Carolina. A native of Buies Creek, Rossie started showing cattle on the eastern Carolina show circuit when she was 8 years old.

"Herefords were not the most accepted breed in the North Carolina circuit when I first started showing," she says. "My involvement with the NJHA taught me how to promote the breed, and after some showing success, North Carolina cattle breeders started buying Herefords."

She adds, "Hereford cattle are great for young 4-H and FFA exhibitors because of their docility."

Rossie aspired to run for a position on the NJHA board of directors so she could have a voice and make a difference in the organization.

"In all of the organizations I'm involved in, I try to run for an office," she says. "I don't want to sit on the sidelines and not have a say. As an NJHA board member, I'm not only a part of the organization but part of the decision making."

Rossie says her personal goal as a member of the NJHA was to someday follow in her father's footsteps and be elected chairman. Her father was the chairman of the National Junior Polled Hereford Council 25 years ago. Last year, her dream came true.

"The NJHA has not only taught me how to lead but also how to follow, which will be vital in my future career," she says.

Rossie adds, "Even though you may feel strongly about something, it is important to listen to others' opinions and decide what will benefit the entire NJHA, not just you."

Rossie's most memorable experience with the NJHA board was her first trip to the American Hereford Association (AHA) office and a photo shoot in front of the AHA sign that ended with fellow board member Danielle Starr in the bushes.

"My fellow board members are some of my best friends," she says. "The most memorable moments are the ones when we were just spending time together and getting to know each other."

Rossie encourages NJHA members to be as involved as possible.

"Members should show at the JNHE and take advantage of the contests because they will meet people from across the country. That is the coolest part of NJHA," she says.

She says involvement in a national organization like the NJHA will be valuable on scholarship applications.

"Scholarships are always looking to see if you've stepped up and gone above and beyond in the organization," Rossie says.

A junior at North Carolina State University, Rossie enjoys the

communications side of agriculture and likes to talk to people who don't fully understand the industry. She plans to pursue her master's and have a career in agriculture. She also plans to continue raising Hereford cattle and build around her current cow family.



Danielle

Danielle Starr, vice chairman

When Danielle Starr's sister, Nicole, turned to her at the 2008 JNHE and handed Danielle her maroon

jacket, she knew she was destined to follow in Nicole's footsteps and help grow the NJHA.

"When I first decided to run for the NJHA board of directors, my main goal was to expand the NJHA and increase participation in the contests and events that I loved being a part of," she says. "When I was younger, I had always been in awe of the NJHA directors and knew that someday I wanted to step up and take a leadership role in the organization."

Through coordinating travel arrangements, traveling to numerous shows and helping the Hereford juniors, the NJHA has strengthened Danielle and helped her grow as a person. "The skills I've acquired and the lessons I've learned from serving as a director have helped me prepare for a future career in business and continued involvement with the NJHA and the AHA," Danielle says.

She adds, "Serving as a NJHA director has allowed me the opportunity to gain responsibility and decision making skills, as I was running my own events and traveling across the country. In addition, I gained confidence and knowledge by talking to established Hereford breeders."

Danielle says, most importantly, teamwork is the biggest asset she obtained from her term on the board.

"Everyone has different strengths, and when you learn how to work together and combine those strengths, it makes the association even stronger," she says. "My fellow board members are now some of my best friends, and I

will cherish those friendships for years to come."

Program for Reaching Individuals Determined to Excel (PRIDE) Convention in Boise, Idaho, was the highlight of her term on the board.

It was her most memorable experience because it took months of planning and collaborating with the NJHA board to make the event a success.

"It was a huge success, and it brought the board and other junior members together and developed new friendships outside of the showring," Danielle says.

Danielle, a native of Manawa, Wis., is set to graduate from Purdue University in the spring of 2012 with a degree in retail management and a double minor in organizational leadership and supervision and animal science.

She is currently interning with Kohl's corporate office in Menomonee, Wis., as an e-commerce merchant analyst. Upon graduation Danielle wants to pursue a career with a large corporation focused in e-commerce merchant analyzing. She also plans to remain active in the AHA and someday serve as a state advisor.



Justin

Justin Bacon, fundraising chair

The Hereford industry is in Justin Bacon's blood. Raising and showing the breed is a long-standing family

tradition for this ninth generation Hereford breeder. A true stockman, Justin grew up showing cattle, pigs and sheep but developed a soft spot for Herefords at a young age.

He remembers being dragged around the showring by Angus steers and quickly appreciated the Hereford breed's docility. He also likes the feeling of the Hereford family from his fellow NJHA members.

A native of Prairie Grove, Ark., Justin says he had always looked up to the NJHA board of directors.

"When I was little, I looked up to the people in the maroon jackets," he says. "I was nervous and didn't know

if I wanted to run for the board, but I worked up enough courage and now, looking back, it's one of the best things I've ever done."

He adds, "Being a NJHA director has been a lot of hard work, but it's given me great opportunities, and I've had a lot of fun."

Justin says the most important lesson he's learned is responsibility.

"Planning one of the largest junior cattle shows in the country is not an easy task, and there is no room for slacking. Everything has to be done somehow and by someone, so you have to do your part," he says.

Justin says his most memorable experience while serving on the board has been the PRIDE conventions he attended.

"I really enjoyed the chance to tour ranches in different parts of the country. Being away from the showring and getting together with my Hereford friends in a different environment was a lot of fun," he says.

Justin challenges NJHA members to get more involved and be a spokesperson for the breed. The NJHA and the JNHE are great networking opportunities, he says.

A junior majoring in food science at Oklahoma State University, Justin is involved with the food science club and Block & Bridle. He plans to further his education and obtain a doctorate in meat science and wants to pursue a career with research and development of food products or would like to work for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.



Jake

Jake Metch, leadership chair

For a young man with a passion for the Hereford breed, serving on the NJHA board of directors was the perfect way

for NJHA leadership chair Jake Metch to give back to others.

The Bainbridge, N.Y., native grew up showing Hereford cattle and enjoyed traveling to Texas every summer and working on his grandparents' ranch.

continued on page 60...



Jake, Danielle, Rossie and Justin ended their tenure on the NJHA board in Kansas City. The foursome traveled throughout the U.S. serving NJHA members.

Jake has attended the JNHE with his brother and aunt every year since he can remember and always wanted to be on the board of directors.

“I was a delegate for five years before I ran for the board,” he says. “I was very aware of the board of directors’ responsibilities and how much they seemed to be getting out of it. I wanted to serve my organization, and I thought I could serve them well.”

Jake says he enjoyed going to the PRIDE conventions and learned a lot about the beef industry as well as getting to meet different people and making lifelong contacts.

The most important lesson Jake learned while serving on the board was responsibility.

“You have to fulfill your responsibilities, and if you don’t, the whole group will look bad,” he says.

A senior at Texas Tech University majoring in civil engineering, Jake plans to pursue a master’s focusing on wastewater re-use. He wants to see the agriculture industry make advancements in water re-use. He would also like to own a Hereford cattle ranch in the future.

Amy Cowan, AHA director of youth activities and foundation, says it has been a pleasure working with this talented group.

“They are true leaders and leave big shoes to fill on the NJHA board,” she says. “They took great pride in their roles as directors and brought a lot of energy, dedication and compassion to the boardroom table.”

Amy adds, “I can say with confidence that they made a difference in the NJHA during their time on the board, and I am very proud of their team, and thank them for their hard work, determination and friendship.”

All four retiring NJHA board members would like to thank their families, Amy Cowan, the national advisors and the AHA staff for their support and guidance over the years. **HW**