



Three generations of Benedicts have Herefords in their blood. The family was in Kansas City, Mo., this summer for the 2011 JNHE to watch four of the six grandkids participate. Pictured (l to r) are: Faith, Chad, Noah, Caleb, Becky, Aidyn, Rylee, Nicole, Bryden, Julie, Larry and Kim.

# Hereford Blood

*Raising and showing Herefords is multi-generational for the Benedict family.*

by Sara Gugelmeyer and Megan Ackerman

“Herefords are in my blood,” says Larry Benedict of Benedict Herefords, Mason City, Ill. He is a third-generation Hereford breeder, and now his children and grandchildren make five generations.

The Benedict commitment to Hereford and youth is multi-generational.

## Hereford heritage

“Both my father and grandfather had Hereford cattle as part of the family grain and livestock operation starting in 1944,” Larry explains. “They’ve always been the breed that best fit for us and, to me, are the breed that best serves the beef industry in all aspects.”

As a youth Larry showed cattle in state and national shows and even had the opportunity to exhibit internationally after winning champion steer at the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago in 1965. Larry and his Hereford steer were invited to attend the Greenwich Agricultural Fair in West Berlin, Germany, and through the support of the people in Mason City, both Larry and the steer boarded a plane and headed to Germany — an amazing experience he’ll never forget.

With such a strong Hereford heritage, it’s no surprise that Larry was involved in the formation of the original American Junior Hereford Association

and was elected as the second chairman of the group in 1967. His commitment to the group even dictated his choice of a honeymoon location.

“Back in the original days of the junior group, they had field days, and those of us on the national junior board had to speak at the field days,” Larry explains. “I got married the same year I was serving as chairman of the junior board. So my wife, Julie, was good enough to spend our honeymoon with me speaking at the North Dakota field day.”

Larry’s years in the junior program were a big part of his life, and he says that getting children involved is invaluable for many

reasons. “Meeting other juniors and being involved in other aspects of the junior program provides a great educational experience all around,” Larry says. “The junior program not only builds enthusiasm for the cattle industry as a whole, but it’s the people you meet who are your friends for life that really matter. Even if you only see them once a year, their influences and experiences add to your life.”

### The next generation

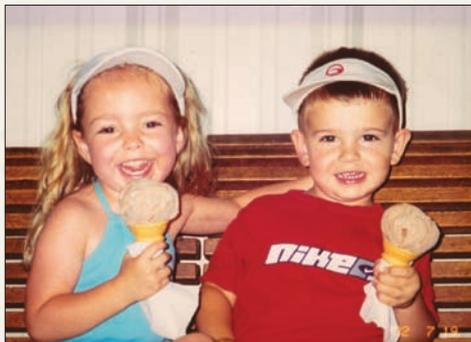
With so much passion for the junior program in their genes, Larry and Julie’s three children — Chad, Nicole (Barber) and Kimberly (Wagoner) — all became involved in junior Hereford activities and in the showing. The family’s first presence at the Junior National Polled Hereford Show came in Milwaukee, Wis., in 1992 when Nicole traveled with other Illinois juniors to the event.

Nicole says she had a wonderful time at her first junior national and was instantly hooked. “I made a lot of friends that trip,” Nicole says, “It was such a great experience — I went home and told my family all about the week and got them into it as well.”

Her family began making the event an annual trip and, throughout the years, had a number of memorable moments and great achievements within the junior program. Chad, the eldest, was highly involved behind the scenes, helping his two young sisters care for and fit their cattle.

Meanwhile, both Nicole and Kimberly followed in their father’s footsteps not only as members of the national junior board but also as chairperson of the board. In the showing and in the various skill and scholarship contests, both girls excelled, and Nicole even served as the National Polled Hereford Queen.

“I learned a lot of leadership and communication skills and made a lot of friends through the junior program,” Nicole says. “I was really



The JNHE was a family gathering even before the grandkids started showing. Pictured here is Rylee and Noah at the 2002 JNHE in Sioux Falls, S.D., and then at the 2011 JNHE.

shy when I went to that first junior national, but attending the shows really brought me out of my shell.”

Nicole’s children, Rylee, 13; Bryden, 9; and Aidyn, 4, are involved in the Hereford business as well. When Rylee was old enough, it was a logical thing for her to jump right into the junior showing. Rylee began her junior show career with a bang, winning the champion horned female honors at the 2006 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Louisville, Ky., and has continued to have tremendous success since then. Bryden, too, has joined his sister in showing success.

### Raising Hereford juniors

But, for Nicole, the benefits for her children go far beyond banners. “It’s been very fulfilling to see Rylee and Bryden make friends and communicate with them. Each year, Rylee tries to do something new, and she’s become a really good public speaker and very intelligent about pedigrees,” Nicole says. “Both



kids set goals and work hard both at home and at the show to accomplish them. I’m very proud of them, and the amount of confidence they’ve gained is easily apparent.”

Nicole also enjoys watching her children work together. After spending many years working with her own siblings, she says it’s fun to watch another generation filled with the same enthusiasm.

Nicole’s brother, Chad, and his wife, Becky, are very involved in the Benedict Herefords operation. So when their first son, Noah, turned the magic age of 7, there was no doubt in Chad’s mind that Noah would get the opportunity to participate in this great event. In

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Larry was inducted into the Illinois Polled Hereford Hall of Fame in February.



The Benedict Hereford legacy continues with Julie and Larry's grandchildren.

2007 Chad was thrilled to have the chance to take his son to compete at the JNHE in Denver. "It was really exciting for him to get that opportunity I never had," Chad says. "I want him to appreciate that we are lucky enough to get to go every year, and he knows that it's his choice to go, so I enjoy knowing that he wants to do this." Chad also points out that his parents have been instrumental in helping with the junior projects, and he is very appreciative of their encouragement.

Now 11, Noah has gained valuable experience from showing

Herefords along with his little brother Caleb, who is 9 years old. Chad's 1-year-old daughter, Faith, cheers her brothers on from the stands.

Chad says he can see a lot of positive changes in his sons as a result of the junior program and show cattle. "The No. 1 thing I see in Noah is the amount of work ethic he's developed and the sense of accomplishment he gets out of participating," Chad says. "He's matured a great deal and I've been amazed to see his showmanship improve, and it's really exciting

that he's asking a lot of questions and wanting to be involved."

Noah says he is hooked on Herefords and loves the annual trip. Although he was tired by the end of the week, his excitement and enthusiasm were still high. "Herefords are really fun and showing is great," Noah says. "You've got to work hard, but it's worth it."

Becky didn't grow up with cattle, but is delighted to see her children taking part in the various aspects of the junior program. "I love seeing them do all these things and be put in leadership roles," Becky says. "It's really been great, and the trips are fun for the entire family."

Noah says he also loves getting to see his cousins and all the other friends he's made from around the country during his short junior career. "You get to travel to all kinds of places, and you get to see your family and friends," Noah says. "My grandparents like to come see me show, and my cousins are here, too, along with a lot of my friends."

Julie Benedict reiterates how fulfilling it is to see their grandkids take an interest in Hereford cattle. "We're very proud and very excited," she says, "this is our legacy that continues."

Although Kimberly and her husband, Toby, don't have any children, they are still an active part of the Hereford scene. Kimberly travels from her home in Georgia to support her family at major shows like the JNHE and also the Illinois Beef Expo and other main events. In fact, in February she was there as Larry was inducted to the Illinois Polled Hereford Association Hall of Fame during the Illinois Beef Expo.

As families grow and expand, getting everyone together is often a challenge. But, as Larry puts it, annual trips to JNHE and other major shows are like reunions, drawing both blood relatives and lifelong Hereford friends together.

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Today the Benedict family uses embryo transfer to produce genetics that will excel in the showing and pasture. Pictured here are a few of the recently weaned 2011 calf crop.