

# In the Spirit of Mr. Hershey



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Milton Hershey, the early 20th century chocolate company magnate, and his wife, Catherine, were unable to have their own children but decided to use their wealth to create a home and school for orphaned boys in 1909. The school later opened for both boys and girls from underprivileged backgrounds as a means to instill a quality education, family values, a work ethic and a chance to contribute to society in a positive way.

Upon the death of Catherine in 1918, Milton donated all of his \$60 million dollars in wealth and established the Hershey Deed of Trust. The trust also mandated that 30% of Hershey Corporation profits (America's largest chocolate company and fifth largest in the world) would go toward the support of the Milton Hershey School. Corporate stockholder challenges have hotly contested the profit contribution to the school through the years, but Milton's ironclad trust has withstood the corporate test of time into the new millennium.

Today, the trust manages assets of \$7 billion that supports the school. Each year, more than 200 senior high students from underprivileged, poverty-stricken backgrounds graduate with top-notch high school educations along with an appreciation of the work ethic involved in horticulture, farming, beef cattle and dairy cattle production, and a host of other skill development opportunities.

More than 1,900 children in grades K through 12 are selected from diverse areas of the country to attend the school and to live in family units cost free. Upon graduation, the students are awarded full collegiate scholarships if they make minimum grade standards.

What's even more impressive is they each have the opportunity to work on a host of farms and to develop life skills that would have never been possible in their original home environments. There are a lot of similarities in what Hereford breeder families provide our young people from what could be considered rural affluent backgrounds and what the Milton Hershey School is providing young people that do not have those family resources.

In 2000, Milton Hershey School farms became a member of the American Hereford Association. For 14 years, its beef seedstock teaching herd has been exclusively Hereford. I had an opportunity to visit with Rachel Teller, the agriculture resource manager for the Milton Hershey School, who said that approximately 20 students have the opportunity to work on the purebred Hereford operation each year. The program is used in its teaching program where kids from K through 12 can learn the difference between beef and dairy cattle and can get a working knowledge of how a ruminant animal functions.

Approximately 20 Hershey students attended the most recent Junior

National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Harrisburg, Pa., two of whom participated in the showmanship competition. Rachel was elated that these kids had the opportunity to attend a major junior national event for the first time and to network with kids from rural family backgrounds.

Milton Hershey's wonderful spirit and passion for helping kids succeed in life is the very spirit that filled the hearts and minds of the amazing organization team that planned and hosted the 2014 JNHE in Harrisburg. Initially, there was a little hesitation in agreeing to schedule the event so far away from traditional cow country. However, under top-notch leadership, impeccable multi-state collaboration and a fundraising machine that rivaled any we have seen, the 2014 JNHE will go down as one of the most rewarding and hospitable events in JNHE history.

As for the parents who agreed to haul cattle, supplies and kids across the country on 24- to 72-hour drives, congratulations. You all collectively demonstrated the same spirit of Milton Hershey. This year's event was within 100 head from matching what would be considered a very large Midwestern U.S. exhibition entry level. What a privilege it was to witness people with similar passion for kids, cattle, the Hereford breed and our beef cattle industry working together in such an amazing way. You should all be very proud. **HW**