



Retiring directors Taryn Adcock, Cody Jensen, Amanda Bacon and Tommie Lynne Mead are pictured with retiring national advisors Cliff and Pat Copeland (far left) and Kyle and Jodi McMillan (far right) receiving their bronze bulls.

Hooked on Herefords

Taryn Adcock, Amanda Bacon, Cody Jensen and Tommie Lynne Mead hand off their maroon jackets to new leadership.

by *Kayla M. Wilkins*

Sitting nervously in their seats three years ago at the 2013 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Kansas City, Mo., four unknowing junior members were soon to embark on a journey with the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) they would come to cherish forever.

Taryn Adcock, Amanda Bacon, Cody Jensen and Tommie Lynne Mead had yet to learn they would spend the next three years wearing the maroon jackets they had admired in their earlier years and serving an organization they all describe now as a second family.

Today, they have shared many laughs and countless hours working toward an even better NJHA and, most recently, found themselves addressing the junior membership as board directors for the final time as they handed off their jackets to the next crop of enthusiastic junior board directors.

Although mere acquaintances before their start in 2013, they have grown into a team dedicated to bettering the NJHA at every opportunity. Amy Cowan, the director of youth activities and foundation, says she has high hopes for each of them as they retire from the board.

“They faced many challenges, but they persevered and grew as



Working with first-year juniors has been one of the highlights of Amanda's time on the board.

individuals as we worked to overcome those,” Amy says. “We will really miss their leadership and creative ideas, but I have no doubt they’ll continue to be great leaders in both the Hereford industry and the agriculture industry as a whole.”

Although they all were at the same podium at the 2016 JNHE saying goodbye to the junior membership, their journeys to that point were all their own.

The journey

Hereford roots run deep in each of the board member’s families. In fact, Taryn and Amanda both had older siblings on the NJHA board prior to them.

Amanda explains her passion for Herefords as one presented by her family but one she also was able to shape and develop in her own unique way.

“I wouldn’t be necessarily where I am as far as my passion without their encouragement to be involved,” Amanda says. “Even if it was just coming outside and working cattle with them at a very young age, that definitely played a major part in developing my passion, but as I have gotten older, I have gotten to shape that passion in my own way.”

Taryn, too, molded her own passion for the Hereford industry stemming from her family's involvement. She affectionately refers to junior nationals and family vacation as one and the same. She even recalls the moment she found herself hooked on Hereford cattle and the people at her first junior national in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Cody shares a similar memory from his first JNHE in Billings, Mont., at only 7 years old, taking his first step into the barn and being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the event.

"I was raised into it, so I always had a love for the association," Cody says, "but I can say, I didn't know how much I loved it until that first junior nationals. I was just amazed at how many people were there and as soon as we walked in that door I just knew this is what I want to be, this is where I want to be, this is the place for me."

At an early age, Tommie Lynne was sure she had found her lifelong passion in the barn working calves with her dad. She describes that time as her happy place and says she just simply couldn't see herself doing anything different looking back.

She recalls that even though she always had a passion for Hereford



Cody says his ability to influence the junior membership was one of his favorite parts of being on the junior board.

cattle, she can distinctly remember when she fell in love with the association and, like her peers, it was, in fact, at her first JNHE.

"Since my first one, I was hooked as I am sure anyone in this barn could tell you, one is all you need and you won't miss one after that," Tommie Lynne says. "Meeting everybody from different states and the different passions and different reasons that everybody else loved it and the things they were good at. It just hooks you."

While they all first attended the JNHE to show their calves, it wasn't long before those maroon jackets started to catch the eye of these young showmen.

"As I got older, I realized there was more to it than just going to shows," Amanda explains. "I realized the organization that was there, the leadership that was there to serve as role models and the quality of the organization, as well."

Realizing the quality of the organization they had been a part of for so many years and experiencing first-hand the influence board members have on other junior members really drew Tommie Lynne's interest in taking part and running for the board in the first place.

When Katlin Mulvaney, a past junior board director from Alabama, first took her post in NJHA leadership, Tommie Lynne quickly took note of the influence and impressions Katlin was making. She recalls Katlin always smiling and offering positive encouragement to others. The idea of doing the same appealed to Tommie Lynne and ultimately the idea of running for a director position became planted in her head.

"I wanted to be able to influence people and help people and give back to this association that has given absolutely everything to me with open arms," Tommie Lynne says. "That's amazing."



Tommie Lynne at orientation leading team-building games with the younger membership.



Taryn, Tommie Lynne and Amanda at newcomer orientation. Taryn stresses the importance of juniors understanding the NJHA is about building lifelong friendships.



Tommie Lynne Mead, 23, is the daughter of Tommy Mead and Cindy Eppich. She is a senior at Georgia Southern University, majoring in business, and hopes to work in agriculture video marketing upon graduation. Now that Tommie Lynne is retiring from the board, she encourages junior members to keep believing in themselves.

For Cody it was a combination of encouragement from a mentor, Sue Rowland, along with the opportunity to observe his peers before him make such a positive mark on the NJHA. He says their stories initially attracted him to the idea and their encouragement reassured him running would be a decision he wouldn't regret.

Taryn says the experience has been one to remember indefinitely. Rewinding to her childhood watching the board members walk through the barns and now seeing where she is brings the idea full circle.

"When you were young you looked up to those people and you thought, 'someday I want to do that and it would be awesome to be in the ring or awesome to be able to do these things,'" Taryn explains. "You get older and you get elected and you think it is a rewarding experience because you looked up to those kids for so long and to know there are people that are looking up to you right now is something that is very humbling."

Growing up and out of the stage of being influenced by the individuals in the maroon jackets, it was time for

these four to turn the tables and start making their mark on the NJHA.

Getting elected

Back in their seats at the awards night in 2013, anxiously waiting to find if they had been elected, Cody says he remembers it like it was yesterday.

"Austin Buzanowski had walked all the way up and around, came up behind me and said, 'congratulations,'" Cody says. "I don't think I stopped smiling there for six hours. I was just so excited to be able to serve as one of the board members for the Hereford association."

Although each of them has a special memory of the night they received their jackets, Taryn's was extra special to her. Tamar, Taryn's older sister was retiring from the board that evening and actually presented Taryn with her jacket, indicating Taryn had been elected for a term as a board director.

That year, retiring board members gave their speeches, hugged their families and then handed over their jackets. When Tamar walked away after hugging their parents, Taryn says she just knew that was it and she had fallen short of her goal of being on the board.

"It was her one chance to be evil, but it was awesome," Taryn says. "Running for the board I met a lot of people whether or not the outcome was positive for me, but even if it wouldn't have been, the experience was well worth it."

Tommie Lynne says her experience running for the board shed light on just how important the association was to her. Every year, Tommie Lynne and her dad haul cattle to national shows and never hire help. With Tommie Lynne running for the board, it was advised they get help, but in honor of tradition, they still didn't.

Unfortunately, Tommie Lynne's dad tore his ACL and MCL that week, leaving her with four calves, her dad and her board candidate duties to take care of all at the same time. She says what happened next gave her even more confidence that running that year was the right decision.

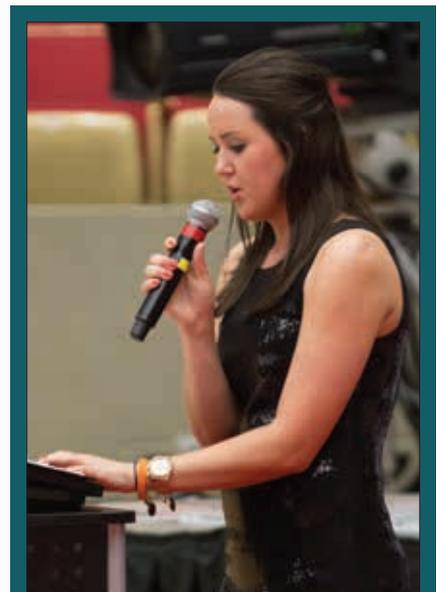
"We had so many people jump in that it was just like, this is it, this is

exactly where I need to be, this is what I want to be doing," Tommie Lynne says. "I tried to make as many thank you notes for that year as I could, but there is no way else that I could have imagined thanking all the people that helped us during that year than running for the board, getting elected and being able to really give back on that perspective."

Soon after each JNHE, the NJHA hosts the Program for Reaching Individuals Determined to Excel (PRIDE) Convention, and a few days before, the new board goes on a retreat, giving them the opportunity to know one another better. Cody and Taryn recall those few days as holding some of their favorite memories.

"You are elected with 12 people and you kind of know who they are, but you really don't," Taryn explains. "Then after you get elected, we go to PRIDE and we have a board retreat right before and those were the best times because you just hung out with the board."

Cody says getting to better know his fellow board members was great,



Taryn Adcock, 22, is the daughter of Jim and Jan Adcock, Assumption, Ill. Taryn grew up on a small Hereford operation and has been a member of the NJHA and the Illinois Junior Hereford Association for 14 years. Taryn realizes there is a competitive spirit among many junior members, but she urges young people to go beyond the competition and to see opportunity for lifetime memories.

but it was even more to him than that because it was his first PRIDE. Getting to know the membership outside of the show scene was something Cody enjoyed and valued from the trip.

PRIDE is traditionally a big event for the NJHA, so one of Amanda's goals when first finding her place on the board was to actually aid in getting the PRIDE Convention to her state. And she was successful in that endeavor.

Board adventures

Being one of the elite few selected by the junior membership to lead them for a full term is quite a feat and these retired board members understand what it means to represent the junior membership.

"I wouldn't trade it for the world," Taryn notes. "It is very honoring to be able to represent an organization of this size and this caliber."

While on the board, these members were not only dedicated to bettering the NJHA and aiding other junior members in reaching their goals but also got the opportunity to improve themselves and to foster relationships with fellow board members and other junior members.

"Some of these girls are my best friends," Taryn says. "You are with them a long time and one of my favorite parts is starting off kind of knowing each other then you leave being really good friends with a lot of people who are going to be in the breed for the rest of their lives."

As they grew together on their team, Amanda says they were able to most efficiently work together to make the best decisions for the organization.

"Even though we are a board of 12 different personalities and characters each person brings about their own attributes or challenges," Amanda explains. "It has been a unique experience with each and every one of them. Each one has left their own personal mark with their individuality and how they handle things or what they brought to the board and the dynamics change every year just because you bring on four new people and you have to figure out how those

new people work and how they fit in is a unique experience."

Cody says those skills they all gained from working together are qualities they will continue to use for a lifetime. Having a hand in putting together an event like the JNHE is something Cody says can be a challenge, but, nonetheless, it was a valuable time to play off each other's talents to achieve the best result.

"Everyone has a little bit different way of how they do it," he says, "so being able to collaborate and use their ideas and your ideas to make it run smoothly is definitely everything you'll need in your career down the road."

Tommie Lynne says planning has been a learning experience in itself and she feels very accomplished looking back at all they've done.

The team spent countless hours aiding in planning not only the JNHE but also other events and initiatives for the junior membership. Cody says he recognizes the magnitude of these events and the teamwork that goes along with them. He says working through unexpected challenges has helped him in being able to think quickly and to resolve problems in the most efficient way.

Along with numerous personal strides made, this group of directors also achieved quite the accomplishment in having an integral part of putting together a record-breaking JNHE in terms of cattle and exhibitors present.

"This is the largest Junior National Hereford Expo we have ever had and to be able to be a part of that and not only in cattle, but our numbers grew tremendously from last year in exhibitors, that is something that is to be proud of," Taryn says.

Looking back

As JNHE 2016 came to a close, the members could all agree it isn't about the blue ribbons or numbers, but it's about the relationships made.

"Going home with a blue ribbon is nice," Taryn explains, "but going home with more friendships and more relationships is more important."

In reflection, each of the retirees has someone who influenced them to



Amanda Bacon, 22, is the daughter of Craig and Debbie Bacon, Siloam Springs, Ark. A May graduate from OSU in agricultural communications and animal science, she hopes to start her career in the communications sector of an agricultural company. As a now retired board member, Amanda advises the incoming junior board members to voice their opinions and to keep in mind the organization can only get better by collaboration.

be the best they could be in the NJHA and life. They all say those individuals were a major driving force in their aiming to be on the board in the first place. It was more than just showing cattle for these members.

"I always say when someone asks, 'the cattle are good, but the people are better,'" Taryn says.

For Cody one of those people was his cousin. Brady Jensen was on the board a year prior to Cody being elected and he says seeing Brady's experience and then getting the opportunity to share it with him was truly special.

"My cousin was the one for me and just to be able to be someone that everyone looks up to in the industry, in the junior industry and in the junior association is truly a gift in itself," Cody says.

Because of those people along the way for each of the retiring members, they all find great joy in influencing all junior members, but especially the younger membership.



Cody Jensen, 23, is the son of Kirk and Steph Jensen, Courtland, Kan. He is a third-generation Hereford breeder and has been a member of the NJHA and the Kansas Junior Hereford Association for 15 years. He encourages juniors to look past the show ring and to partake in other things the NJHA has to offer.

“My favorite moment is just to see a junior getting involved for the first time,” Amanda says, “really enjoying themselves, making connections and making the friendships that they’ll always come back to each summer just like I did.”

Like Amanda, Cody finds much joy in being there for first-year participants. To him meeting a new junior member and seeing the excitement in his or her face never gets old.

“Every year you meet a new junior, someone’s first junior nationals,” Cody says. “You don’t realize how much you make an impact on them, but the next year you come back and they are so excited to see you. To make a junior member’s memory like that from only talking to them for five minutes and to impact them that much is truly an awesome experience.”

These moments are near and dear to all their hearts. Tommie Lynne recalls one of her most special moments while on the board. At her first junior national after being elected,

she says she was walking back to the barn after a very long day. She recalls how badly her feet hurt from being on them all day and how mentally and physically exhausted she was. The energy to even smile was almost nonexistent at this point in the day and all she wanted to do was sit down.

However, her moment of relaxation was taken away by a group of Alabama juniors — she didn’t mind. After a short visit with one of the youngest members, the boy quickly ran away. Tommie Lynne, puzzled, watched him approach his state advisor, grab something from her and hurry back to Tommie Lynne.

She vividly remembers him having her hold out her hand as he placed a pocket angel into it.

“He said, ‘this is a pocket angel and I want you to have it. It is always supposed to keep you safe, but you have to keep it with you at all times,’” Tommie Lynne recalls, “I literally just teared up because it was one of those moments where I was exhausted, and this little boy comes up with something like that, that is dear to his heart and he wants to share that with me. Wow.”

Aside from the moments of pure exhaustion and other challenges there is always a light at the end of the tunnel that reminded these four why they chose and were fortunate enough to be a part of the board.

“You know, a lot of people think that being on the board just requires a lot of responsibility and it does, don’t get me wrong,” Tommie Lynne explains, “but the biggest thing honestly that it has changed is the way I perceive life.”

What’s next?

Although the jackets are now with new owners and the retiring addresses have been given, these retirees aren’t done with the Hereford industry.

“I am definitely going to stay very active in the association because this is something you have that much of a passion for, you can’t just throw it away once you’re done,” Cody says.

In fact, a recent graduate of Kansas State University, Cody has taken a job with Biozyme VitaFerm, one of the JNHE title sponsors and says he has immensely enjoyed the position thus far and it has been awesome to work for a company which has been a title sponsor for so many years.

Amanda, a recent graduate of Oklahoma State University (OSU) with a degree in agricultural communications has a passion for making her mark on not only the beef industry but also the agriculture industry as a whole.

“My long-term goal is to connect that ever-growing distance between the farmer and the consumer,” Amanda says. “Just narrow the gap that continues to grow and is going to be harder to narrow as time goes on.”

As for Tommie Lynne, she most definitely will not be far from the Hereford scene. Approaching the end of her business degree at Georgia Southern University, she hopes to make her way in the video marketing arena for livestock. Additionally, she looks forward to continuing to be her dad’s right-hand woman on their Hereford operation. She also looks forward to helping potential new junior members in her family.

Taryn finished her degree in business with a concentration in marketing from Illinois College in May and now works for the Illinois Beef Association as their director of outreach and promotion in Springfield, Ill.

Aside from her full-time career, Taryn can speak for them all when she says she will be around the barns of the JNHE for many years to come.

“Herefords are always going to be a part of my life. I hope some day when I have kids we are going to junior nationals because I want my kids to have the same positive experiences that I’ve had,” Taryn says. “It’s expensive and it’s a time commitment, but I want to be able to give that same type of experience to my kids.” **HW**