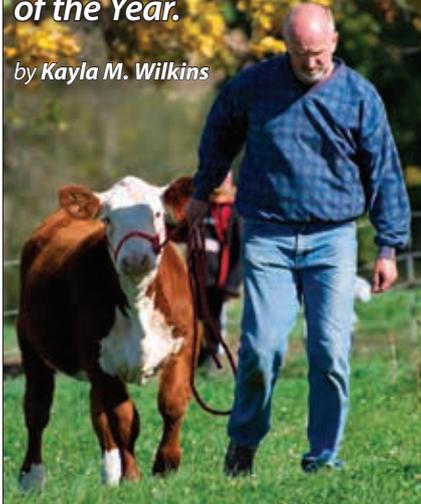


More Than an Advisor

BJ Jones was honored in his home state as Advisor of the Year.

by Kayla M. Wilkins



Those in attendance at the 2016 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Madison, Wis., noticed a gentleman around the barns, most typically with a radio in one hand, a cell phone in the other and a friendly smile on his face.

He served as the co-chair in planning the JNHE and was the familiar face exhibitors and their families could turn to with problems over the course of the week. Although his part in planning this record-breaking event was quite challenging at times, he says he wouldn't have traded it. However, bending over backward to help junior membership reach their goals is nothing new for the 2016 Advisor of the Year, BJ Jones, DVM, Darlington, Wis.

From humble beginnings

Jones got his start in the Hereford business a bit differently than most. He was born in West Allis, Wis., a suburb of Milwaukee, and didn't move onto the family farm until he was 8 years old.

He says his family had little to no working knowledge about raising cattle, but they bought their first Herefords

in the 1980s and started to make their way into the beef industry. It wasn't long before Jones discovered what would turn into his lifelong passion for the Hereford industry.

After attending his first junior national, he says he never looked back. For Jones it was all about expanding his knowledge of the industry and building relationships with other juniors.

"We didn't do it to win a class, we did it because we had fun," he says. "We really had fun going and learning about the beef industry and Herefords."

Years later, he still carried the rich desire to continue learning and to be very active in the cattle industry. As a result, he spent several years furthering his education to become a large animal veterinarian. In the meantime, Jones started his own family. With his wife, six kids and a pasture full of Herefords — he couldn't be more content.

"It gets in your blood," he says. "I sometimes think it is crazy because I work with cattle all day, but it still warms your heart when you go home and see some nice looking cows out in the pasture on green grass."

Because of Jones' start in the Hereford business, he always had a desire to give back to the youth and inspire young people to take full advantage of all the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) and the Wisconsin Junior Hereford Association (WJHA) had to offer. It was no surprise when the opportunity rolled around in 2006 to co-advise the WJHA that Jones jumped in full force.

"We just enjoy working with kids and I want kids to do things the right way," Jones expresses. "We want everyone to have a good time and feel the same way about Herefords as we feel."

Focused on the youth

Since 2006 Jones has moved from co-advisor to the single advisor for WJHA. He enjoys the opportunity to encourage youth to be involved in the association and has never lost his desire to help others no matter what it takes.

In fact, Sondra Brancel, Endeavor, Wis., recalls an instance a number of years ago when Jones stepped in to help a young man whose father was

serving in Afghanistan. The member was preparing for his county fair, and she says Jones did everything in his power to assure the boy's success.

Brancel says that instance serves as a mold for Jones with all youth he encounters, and current junior members can attest to it.

Annah Dobson, the current WJHA Queen, says she experienced Jones' encouragement firsthand at her first JNHE in 2015. She says it wasn't until then that she realized the devotion it takes to be the type of advisor Jones is.

"Even when his own family was showing, BJ would be down the aisle helping myself, or another first year member with any problem we were having," she says. "His dedication to helping us and making sure we enjoyed our experiences is something I wouldn't have expected from such a busy man, but there he was lending a helping hand in the chaos."

Jones says he is very passionate about being an advisor, and one of his main focuses has always been to inspire young members to be involved. According to Briana Katzenberger, the current WJHA president, Jones has been successful in that and so much more.

She says in her position as the WJHA president and state director four years prior, she has the opportunity to work alongside Jones and to be the product of what his type of encouragement can do for a junior. His support and endless encouragement has influenced her and her peers to do their best at all times to better not only their organization but themselves, as well.

"BJ always supports me, my decisions and ideas, and he discovers ways to help me succeed in my position," Katzenberger says. "In addition, BJ encourages my growth in the Hereford industry. His resourcefulness makes for a reliable and knowledgeable leader, friend, and father. He consistently uses our creativity as a junior association to develop beneficial and useful suggestions instead of turning our ideas away, and pushes us to do our best."

Along with being such an integral part of WJHA, comes the opportunity to see juniors flourish from their youth

into adults. Although years have passed, retired members still share the same memories and experiences from working with Jones.

Danielle Starr, past WJHA president, says Jones has never failed to push the membership to see the big picture of the cattle industry.

“BJ has helped evolve the leadership abilities of numerous Wisconsin Hereford junior members, me included,” Starr says. “He sees the bigger picture in exhibiting at cattle shows like lifelong friendships, time spent with family and developing the next generation of leaders.”

Since Jones has stepped into the role of advisor, the Wisconsin state association has only continued to expand each year. Julie Wiechert, past WJHA member, says she attributes much of the growth to Jones’ leadership.

“The Wisconsin Junior Hereford Association is a strong organization that is a direct result of a foundation built on great leadership and dedicated families,” she says.

Jones has seen countless kids come through Wisconsin’s junior program and, over the years, has gained an even better idea of how he can best influence those individuals. He says when he thinks about advising young people, he remembers himself as a junior and aims to steer kids away from missing out on things because of a fear of stepping outside the box.

“I tell kids to step outside of your comfort zone and do at least one activity that you haven’t done before,” he explains. “At the end of the day no one is going to remember what place you stood because there is only one winner, but the friends and connections you make are going to be lifelong.”

These are the reasons Jones was so adamant about hosting the JNHE in his association’s home state in the first place. He was inspired to promote junior activity and to encourage increased involvement in the national association. With record-breaking attendance for the WJHA and the NJHA, he exceeded his goal.



2016 Advisor of the Year recipient, BJ Jones, pictured with 2015-16 NJHA Vice Chairman Taryn Adcock.

Close to home

Hosting the JNHE in Wisconsin has been a longtime goal for Jones. It’s because of this great leadership and devotion that he was able to lead the charge in bringing the JNHE to Wisconsin for “A Hereford Scene in 2016.”

“That’s part of the reason we wanted to host it was to strengthen the breed association at the state and get more people excited about Hereford cattle,” he explains. “We wanted them to see what the junior nationals was all about and get the bug like I did then stay and be a part of the breed and help keep our national program going in our section of the world here.”

As his goal started to develop into reality, Jones knew he couldn’t do it on his own, thus, calling on help from Sondra Brancel. He says she played an integral part in putting everything together over the last three years, and he is grateful for her and others like her who stepped up to make the event possible.

Brancel says when she first agreed to help, she wasn’t exactly sure what she had gotten herself into.

“What I did know however was that I was going to have the opportunity to work with someone who is as passionate as anyone in this organization about creating a memorable experience for all the families from across the entire country attending the junior national

in our home state,” Brancel says. “Everything he does is to the best of his ability and I couldn’t be more proud to have worked along side him over these last few years of planning and preparation. Through my role as co-chair, I too have been the recipient of BJ’s leadership and encouragement to grow in personal and professional development.”

Jones says that after years of preparation, it was very special to see the show go off as smoothly as it did. However, he says having his family there along with the commitments of managing the show, ensuring a smooth running show would have not been possible without the support and effort

from them as well as friends who volunteered to lend a helping hand.

“It really makes your heart swell up to know that it came off in such a big way,” Jones says.

This year was also special for his daughter, Bailey, as she was running to be on the NJHA board.

When awards night rolled around and Jones received advisor of the year, he says he was shocked and very humbled to have been recognized, but that wasn’t the end of his excitement. Moments later, Bailey was elected to the junior board.

He says the excitement of her working so hard to achieve her goal and then making it a reality was simply overwhelming.

“When they called her name it was just fantastic, I think we are still on a high from it.”

The Jones family definitely had a great week, and Jones says as for Advisor of the Year, he believes the award is a reflection of not only himself but everyone who helped him along the way.

“We had so much positive feedback this week, and this was just the cherry on top,” Jones says. “There was so much applause and to me, it felt like it was coming from the heart. It was a reflection not only on me, but the people we have here in Wisconsin that helped put this on.” **HW**