

Shaping the Next Generation



Jack Ward

Each year, this issue of the *Hereford World* is heavily influenced by coverage of the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), and it gives us an opportunity to reflect on what a blessing it is to live in a country that affords us to choose what we want to do and how we raise our children.

It especially hits home for Mary Ann and me as our oldest son, Cameron, has completed his junior show career and is finishing his college degree, and our second son, Carter, has begun his junior year in college with only one year left to compete on the national junior level. As I reflect on their junior years, I am sure I have the same feeling as many of you, and I am also sure that none of us would trade the memories or the opportunities our kids have had through these programs.

Cameron will be finishing a degree in drama and theater at Southern Indiana University this fall, and Mary Ann and I have enjoyed watching him pursue this interest since he was very

young. It is also easy to see how his involvement in junior livestock activities has helped him gain confidence and talent in this area.

Similar to other parents of children involved with livestock projects, our kids were not just cattle showmen, but they were involved in many of the contests and leadership activities and each of these activities has forced our sons to be strong in public speaking, quick and precise in their thinking and on time and able to follow an agenda. And, most importantly, they had to work with others to achieve a common goal.

We may not realize that all of this is happening as they are all reading over speeches, studying for a quiz bowl, practicing a sales talk or organizing a cook-off team, but all of these activities are making our children stronger and giving them an edge in a very competitive world.

An impressive JNHE

The JNHE was another huge success, and the state of Wisconsin, American

Hereford Association staff, National Junior Hereford Association board of directors, junior members, breeders and sponsors should all be proud of the event — each of you should feel a spirit of accomplishment for a job well done.

The numbers speak for themselves as we saw more than 800 youth from nearly 40 states compete in contests, shows, showmanship and, most significantly, interact with others that have the same goals and passion for the Hereford breed and agriculture.

One of the most noticeable things at this year's JNHE was the number of younger exhibitors we had at the show. This really should get you excited about the long-term growth of the program and the continued excitement we see in the Hereford breed. It's really fun to stand around ringside and walk through the aisles of the barn and see both accomplishment and disappointment in the eyes of the exhibitors, because both of these emotions are vital for the growth of our children.

As the summer comes to a close and our children finish with the county and state fairs and head back to school, parents can feel a great deal of accomplishment because they have armed their children with the skills to be assets to the livestock industry and their local community and to be successful in any career path they choose. **HW**



Taking a break from lining up classes at the Junior National Hereford Expo owned female show, Jack Ward watches a division selection.