

## Where Are They Now?

Thousands of young cattle enthusiasts have had many of their best memories through involvement in the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA). The NJHA hopes to shape young, responsible leaders, and it has done just that. Many NJHA alumni are in the industry now raising Hereford cattle, taking on impressive careers and even bringing their kids back to the Junior National Hereford Expo every summer. Follow this series to read more about just a few past NJHA members who are making a difference in the industry.



# Industry All-Starrs

*Past junior members make their marks as professionals.*

*by Kayla M. Wilkins*

**F**rom outside one could hear Shania Twain tunes echoing loudly from a barn radio. After stepping inside, one would be delighted to have a front seat at a dance party and concert featuring a trio of Starr girls, working their calves, of course.

This was a common sight for visitors at the Starr barn in Manawa, Wis., especially during the summertime in preparation

for junior nationals, which they more affectionately refer to as family vacation.

Many years have passed since those days, but the passion for the agriculture industry in Lindsay, Nicole and Danielle has not faded.

Lindsay Johnson is married and has two kids and works as the public relations coordinator for Genex Cooperative in Shawano, Wis. Genex Cooperative is a company specializing

in progressive cattle genetics and reproduction, among other things.

Nicole and Danielle Starr have both taken on roles in the agriculture-marketing sector, as well. Nicole is an account executive at Bader Rutter in Brookfield, Wis., and Danielle is an account supervisor with Osborn Barr in Kansas City, Mo. Both companies are leading advertising agencies targeting agricultural clients.

The three girls grew up on the family's small Hereford farm, where they discovered their shared passion for the cattle industry.

### The Starr sisters

Lindsay recalls her dad commenting on their love for raising cattle and how he always thought it was crazy all three girls shared such a desire to help with the cattle business. She says it was a good thing they did because it was an integral part of their upbringing.

"I really do think that it probably has made us closer because we had to work together," Lindsay explains. "Not one of us could do it by ourselves, so we needed each other."

Although the girls weren't scared to get their hands dirty in the barn, their dad had to remember they were girls and with that comes entertainment all its own. Danielle recalls a time her overpacking for a junior national left them a comical memory.

She remembers a rule her dad implemented about the girls all carrying whatever they packed, but that didn't faze them, especially her, in terms of how much was acceptable to bring along.

Being the style-conscious young lady she is, Danielle had packed every color of boots in her closet in preparation for junior national show day, including a particular pair of purple boots.

That year, the junior national show shirts just happened to be yellow with purple writing, a perfect match for Danielle's boots.

"Dad said, 'Are you kidding me right now? We had no idea what color these shirts were going to be and you just happened to have the same color pair of boots?'" Danielle says.

They all say they could go on for days about memories from the National Hereford Junior Association (NJHA) because they not only were heavily involved in contests and showing but gained and grew a lot as individuals.

During their early years of involvement, the girls got the

unique opportunity to represent Wisconsin in the team fitting contest at the 2000 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Tulsa, Okla. At the time, Lindsay was the senior member, Nicole was the junior and Danielle was the peewee. Nicole says this experience served as a template for many other things they did as a team both at home and on the show road.

"That was a fun thing we got to do together and represent our state," Nicole recalls, "It was just exciting to do that as a team, each playing a specific role and focusing in on our fitting skills. Team would be a good way to describe us."

Their involvement together in the NJHA did not end there. In the Starr family, showing cattle was a family affair, so when one of them would win, it was a win for them all. In fact, one of Lindsay's most fond memories in the NJHA was when she and her sisters exhibited the reserve champion cow-calf pair at the 2003 JNHE in Indianapolis.

"It was really more like a team event, it wasn't just because it was my cow that won, but it was something we all worked hard on and could celebrate that win together," Lindsay explains. It was really a good feeling because you know you worked hard for it, and you don't ever know if you are going to do well in the showing, but you really had that sense of success afterwards."

Once Lindsay's involvement in the NJHA came to a close, Nicole and Danielle became even more active by being elected to the junior board. They both recall their experience on the NJHA board as a major milestone in their lives where they grew a lot and learned even more.

"During that week of JNHE you work such crazy hours," Danielle recalls, "but, looking back, you know it was all worth it because of what those experiences meant to you."

"It was an incredible responsibility because you knew you had people's family vacations in your hands so you wanted to make

sure that every single person had the absolute best experience at the Junior National Hereford Expo," she says. "Today, in my professional career, I see many employers that look for people who have worked in agriculture because we know sometimes you have to work more than eight hours in a day, but it all pays off in the end."

Nicole can agree that time spent on the NJHA board was time well spent. She says along with the excitement of the JNHE and being around the people of the Hereford breed, she was able to grow from a professional development standpoint immensely.

"Being able to go up to a complete stranger, introduce yourself and have a conversation

*continued on page 42...*



The Hereford passion goes way back for the Starr sisters. Lindsay is pictured with one of their first Hereford calves.



Nicole showing a heifer at her first junior national at the age of 7.



Danielle's passion for Hereford cattle and the people of the Hereford industry is still strong today.

with them and get to know them has been a huge help to me as I have grown in my career. I can communicate with people that are from all walks of life," Nicole explains. "I really cherish all the lifelong friendships and connections made over the years. You know you are truly friends with someone when you can go months, even years, without talking to the person and then pick up right where you left off at a cattle show or sale."

Making those connections within the industry and truly grasping the idea of how the industry is beyond a typical eight-to-five role has been something all three girls have valued. They can all attest to their involvement in the junior association having a huge influence on their work ethics and excitement for their careers today.

"I think that hands-on experience that you've had in a specific industry is very valuable and there are some things that cannot be taught," Nicole explains, "Sometimes you just need to experience them first-hand and grow up with it. This industry is how I spend my past-time, my free-time, my weekends, and my vacation days revolve around this."

Looking back, they say they were all learning many life lessons



Lindsay, Nicole and Danielle enjoying a recent Hereford show together.

that have proven so valuable for them today, but like everything else, there comes a time for one chapter to close and another to open. Among one of Danielle's favorite junior memories is when her older sister, Nicole, handed off her maroon jacket to her at the JNHE in Kansas City and Lindsay, was there to watch.

"It was nice that she came back to support us because we had been there with her for all those years," Danielle says. "It was so rewarding that our whole family could be together to have that experience."

### Stepping into a career

As Nicole's and Danielle's junior careers were ramping up, Lindsay was on the road to her professional career. Lindsay went to the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and pursued a

degree in marketing and communications with a minor in animal science. While there, she remained active in the NJHA, attending the JNHE each summer, in addition to student organizations and internships before stepping into her current role after graduation.

"I took a temporary job here at Genex Cooperative and I was only supposed to be here for six months, but 11 years later and I am still here," Lindsay says jokingly.

She says she is very passionate about her position in public relations and enjoys working on communications materials for their beef lineup as well as planning and coordinating events.

"What has kept me at my job is people. I get to work with a lot of people within the cattle industry and so I really enjoy that," Lindsay explains. "It is always interesting that I can mix what has been part of my life at a small age as to what I do as a career."

Like Lindsay, Nicole shares the same excitement for meshing her career with her childhood passion. She says her position with Bader Rutter allows her to bring her passion for the cattle industry into her everyday life.

"What gets me up every day is the fact that I can work in the beef cattle industry and give back to an industry that has raised me," she says. "When I started out I didn't realize that what I was doing every day would somehow have a positive impact on my career."

Prior to stepping into this role, Nicole graduated from Michigan State University (MSU) in 2010 with an animal science degree and a minor in agriculture business. However, her excitement for a career related to the agriculture industry began well before she even graduated from college.

Nicole spent her college years working in the MSU beef center, where she was able to continue showing cattle and only grow her passion for the industry further.



The entire Starr family attended the JNHE in Madison, Wis., this summer. Their family time still revolves around their deep roots in the Hereford industry.

In addition to her campus job, Nicole spent time interning with the American Hereford Association.

These experiences, along with others, aided in paving her path and developing her desire to pursue a career at Bader Rutter, where she fosters relationships with clients and aids them in reaching their marketing goals through strategy, campaigns and marketing plans.

"I was attracted to marketing and communications because I wanted to make a difference, and give farmers and ranchers the tools that they need to be successful in their operations," she explains. "I think the best part is that my professional and personal life are blended."

Although a majority of her job is working with clients, Nicole still has the unique opportunity to advocate for the ag industry in her very own office building every day. Although Bader Rutter has many agriculture clients, not all of the employees are familiar with the industry.

Nicole has seen this as an opportunity to reach out and to connect with those individuals about agriculture. She says this has undoubtedly been a very rewarding piece of her job.

"This is how my parents raised me and now I am working in an industry that impacted my childhood, basically raised me," she says, "and I am able to give back."

Although all three girls are working in communications in some way, Nicole's and Danielle's roles are similar as Danielle is an account supervisor with Osborn Barr, but her journey is quite different than that of her older sisters.

Danielle went to Purdue University, where she pursued a major in retail management with a minor in animal science. She even studied abroad at the London College of Fashion for a summer before completing her degree.

She attributes her strong work ethic and networking opportunities she gained during her time in the NJHA to landing her first job in marketing for Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) LLC. She says that her time working for an Association



Lindsay's son, Isaac, takes an active role on the farm.

that provided her a start as a junior member was a great opportunity to give back.

"Once I was off the junior board and worked with CHB I judged one of the contests at junior nationals," she explains. "It was so cool to come full circle from being there as a child and then being employed by Hereford and judging a contest."

After some time in that job, Danielle moved into her current role with Osborn Barr.

"They contacted me to see if I would be interested and it was one of those perfect opportunities that fell into my lap," she says, "and I have loved every minute of it."

Danielle manages client relations and plays a critical role in the relationship between the agency and client. She assures that all ideas are heard and aids in making sure the final project fits the client's goals for his or her marketing plan.

Just like her sisters, Danielle says that working with individuals who are in the industry that she has such a passion for is extremely rewarding.

"My clients are cattlemen but they are also brilliant marketers so in my role, I'm able to work on products and programs that directly tie back to those same producers," she says, "It's a privilege to contribute to something that positively affects the industry that has given me so much."

### Today

Obviously the desire to invest in the cattle industry has not died with the trio. In fact, they say their time in the NJHA has greatly affected their ability to perform in a professional setting whether it is managing

people or exhibiting a good work ethic or networking skills.

Any given weekend in Manawa, one can still see the Starr Hereford operation as a family venture. Every Friday when 5 o'clock rolls around, Nicole is on her way to the family farm to play her part in the success of their herd, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

As a family, they still frequently vacation at cattle shows. Most recently they were all together for a day at the 2016 JNHE. And a new generation has even grown up that shares the same excitement for cattle. Lindsay and her husband, Brad, have a 5-year-old, Isaac, and a 2-year-old, Charlotte.

According to Lindsay, Isaac is already rearing to get into the showring. She says he has helped bottle feed a set of twin calves on their place and has high hopes for the two calves.

"We have a small local show on Labor Day weekend and they have one of those kids and calves type contests," Lindsay explains, "and so he is determined that he is taking both of them to that show. I am pretty sure we are committed because he is so determined."

Lindsay is excited her children are growing up around the cattle industry as she and her sisters did, gaining the passion they can all share.

"I wouldn't want it any other way," she says. "I want my kids to be raised around cattle because that's how I was raised. There are so many kids who don't get to experience a calf being born or understand the value of hard work and that is so important to me that our kids experience this first-hand."

The days of these girls singing their hearts out to Shania Twain in the barn together, packing purple boots and winning shows across the country are long gone, but they are still making those memories with family and in their careers. Although they are all on their separate journeys now, Nicole says their motto always holds true.

"We are the Starr girls. We can do it. We can do anything." **HW**