

Building the Legacy

As summer winds down, state fairs begin and school starts; it's a great time to reflect on what an amazing summer it has been. After a record-breaking Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Madison, Wis., who couldn't be excited about the future of this breed. "A Hereford Scene in 2016" was a magnificent event that will be hard to top thanks to the host committee, volunteers, American Hereford Association staff and generous sponsors who make this event possible each year.

As families gear up for the JNHE, they spend countless hours in the barn working with their animals in hopes of having a successful show at the JNHE. As a young girl, I had big dreams of being successful in both quality of cattle and showmanship throughout my junior career at such prestigious events such as the JNHE.

As I've grown older, I've learned the biggest lessons and achievements aren't always defined by a banner or can be won in the showing. It was through the activities offered at the JNHE and the Faces of Leadership Conference that my life skills and leadership attributes were constructed. By taking advantage of the contests offered at this year's JNHE, many juniors enhanced their knowledge of public speaking and beef facts and even got the chance to bring out their inner art skills.

A few weeks later juniors continued to grow and develop at the Faces of Leadership Conference hosted in Amarillo, Texas. We traveled to a different part of the country and toured some of the most influential operations in the Hereford breed such as Barber Ranch, Pérez Cattle Co. and Copeland & Sons Herefords.

We were also given the chance to visit West Texas A&M University and to see its current research in cloned beef cattle carcasses and the breeding of the clones to achieve and breed for progeny that have yield grade 1 carcasses. Not to mention visiting the Palo Duro Canyon and seeing a piece of history coming to life through the TEXAS outdoor musical.

We are fortunate to be a part of an association that offers so many opportunities to grow as leaders in this industry. Take advantage of every chance you can.

Each year the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) works on putting new ideas in place to make the next JNHE even better than the last one. One of the changes made this year was moving the group classes to earlier in the week in hopes of getting more participation.

The state group of five show had a drastic increase in numbers. There were more than 110 head of cattle representing 22 states in the ring at one time. As I stood in the ring waiting for judges Geoff

Andras and Matt Copeland to select a champion group, I recall looking around the ring at the cattle, exhibitors and the audience and getting goose bumps. If you couldn't be there to see it in person, let me paint a picture because it truly was a sight that will never be forgotten.

Cattle entered one by one, lining up side by side in the groups of their respective states. There were three state groups in one horizontal row and about seven or eight vertical columns. There were almost too many cattle to fit in the ring at one time. Imagine 110 head of red and white cattle standing side by side in perfect rows and columns in a large coliseum with the Grammy-themed mural in the background.

While Geoff and Matt gave a speech before selecting the group from Oklahoma as the champions, I thought "how blessed am I to be standing inside that ring wearing a maroon jacket and having a part in continuing the legacy of the Hereford breed."

Being involved in the Hereford breed isn't about how many banners are hung around a house or who has the highest selling cattle that year. Being involved in this industry is about the experiences that turn into lifelong lessons and the friends that turn into family. The Hereford industry continues to grow and thrive because of the people involved in it who are all working toward continuing this legacy. I owe my family a great deal of thanks for pushing me to be so highly involved in this program. It is an absolute honor to be serving as the 2016-17 chairman for an association that has truly built me.

No matter what side of the country you live on, no matter the quality or size of your operation, we all have the chance to put our stamp on the Hereford breed and its everlasting legacy. I surely hope you'll join me in doing so. **HW**



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