

# A Gift to Give Back

*Legacy Hereford breeder Bonnie Coley-Malir attributes her time on the junior Hereford board and involvement in the Hereford breed with her successes today.*

by **Kaylen Baker**

**A** Hereford legacy that began 78 years ago is now funding leadership opportunities for Hereford youth and future generations of the breed.

Bonnie Coley-Malir was born into a long-standing Hereford family in Lafayette, Tenn. The Coley family

operation was started in 1938 by her grandfather, V.H. Coley, her father, Dee Coley, and her uncle, Clyde Coley.

While growing up, it didn't take Coley-Malir long to fall in love with Hereford cattle, especially the junior program, formerly the American Junior Hereford Association (AJHA), she says.

"I went to my first AJHA convention when I was in the 8th grade, and that's where I decided I really wanted to get involved with the junior association," Coley-Malir says. "I was fortunate to win the national speech contest, and during my freshman year in college I ran for the national board and was elected to a three year term."

After graduating college in 1988 from the University of Tennessee with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and a major in animal science, Coley-Malir knew her passion was working with youth and set out to begin her career.

"After college, I went to work for the American International Charolais Association as the head of their junior activities," Coley-Malir says. "After six months in that position, the junior activities position opened at the American Hereford Association (AHA), and I couldn't pass up the opportunity to work for the breed I love."

It was Coley-Malir's position with the AHA that allowed her to cross paths with her husband, Rick.

"I met Rick in Kansas City, Mo., during the National FFA Convention in 1989," Coley-Malir says. "He was a past national FFA president and was presenting a workshop at the convention. I was there for work. I firmly believe the Association brought me together with my husband."

## **Passion for leadership**

The pair now resides in Dublin, Ohio, where they own and operate City Barbeque, a restaurant and catering company with 29 locations in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and North Carolina. However, the Hereford breed is still near and dear to the Malir household.



Rick Malir and Bonnie Coley-Malir recently made a monumental contribution to the future of Hereford youth programs.

Pictured (l to r) are members of the Coley family: Tommy, Bob, Bonnie, Jim, Martha, Carol and Johnny.



“When Rick and I got married in 1991, I had to leave the AHA,” Coley-Malir says. “I can still say it was my favorite job I’ve ever had.”

Because of Coley-Malir’s passion for Hereford youth, the pair heavily discussed donating to the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA), and decided they wanted to give a donation that would be primarily focused on leadership activities for National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members.

The Malirs debuted their monumental gift Aug. 27, 2016, at The Harvest II event at the Kunde Family Winery in Sonoma Valley, Calif. The pair revealed they are giving a \$500,000 cash gift paid over 10 years to HYFA for leadership programs and announced they will make a \$1 million planned estate gift to HYFA, bringing their total donation to Hereford youth to \$1.5 million.

“I really want our Hereford youth to have the same opportunities I had growing up, and I know some of the leadership activities and events available can be cost prohibitive for a lot of people,” Coley-Malir says. “My hope is that through our donation, more kids will be able to participate in these leadership activities that will give them life skills that are crucial for their success.”

Malir says donating to HYFA was a no-brainer for him and his wife.

“If Bonnie had not been working for the AHA in 1989, I would never have met her,” Malir says. “That should be reason enough to donate to HYFA – but it is a tremendous program, and I am more than happy to support Bonnie’s passion and vision for our donation.”

Coley-Malir says if it weren’t for the support of her mother, brothers, Bob and Jim, and sister, Carol, as well as the junior association and AHA, she wouldn’t be where she is today.

“My mom always made sure I stayed involved in Hereford events,” Coley-Malir says. “She knew those events would develop me as a person and give me the life skills I needed to succeed.

“Scholarships I received through the Association got me through college,” Coley-Malir says. “What other organization would I want to give back to? I showed

cattle, but I was more active on the leadership side of the NJHA, and that’s how I got to where I am.”

#### The next generation

Malir says he believes the junior association is instilling qualities in Hereford youth that will build the next generation of strong leaders.

“This nation needs leaders,” Malir says. “More than ever, we need youth leadership development opportunities and any time we can expose our young people to these activities, we need to do so. The NJHA and HYFA provide those opportunities and that is so important to our youth and their future.”

Aside from the leadership opportunities the NJHA and the HYFA provide, Coley-Malir says the friendships made through the organization are also important.

“The friendships I’ve made through the AHA have become life-long,” Coley-Malir says. “The friends I made back then are still a huge blessing to me. This

is just another benefit of youth getting involved in this organization.”

AHA Board of Directors member Terri Barber was a junior member when Coley-Malir served as the junior activities director. The two have become close friends through the AHA.

“Bonnie was a role model and influential mentor to me while I was a junior member,” Barber says. “I

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— Bonnie Coley-Malir

looked up to her and she was an inspiration for me to go into the youth activities field.

“When Bonnie told me she and Rick were planning on donating a leadership gift to HYFA, I was beyond thrilled,” Barber says. “It is neat to see someone who was so impactful in my life step up to the plate with a contribution of this magnitude for future generations to help grow their leadership for years to come.”

For the Malirs, their gift is about investing in future generations.

“There is no better investment than our youth,” Coley-Malir says. “Every kid has potential. In order for them to tap into that potential, they have to develop those essential life skills. They are our future, and we have to help them succeed.”

The Malirs are hopeful their gift will encourage others within the breed to donate to the future of Hereford youth.

“Around 35 years ago, when Bonnie and I were involved in youth activities, someone was

AHA Board of Directors member Terri Barber was a junior member when Coley-Malir served as the junior activities director. Now close friends, Barber says during her time as a junior, Bonnie was a role model for her.



supporting us,” Malir says. “Now, we are picking up the torch and supporting the next generation. Anyone who has benefitted from HYFA should consider giving back to the organization.”

Barber says one of the greatest things Hereford breeders can do is help fund youth leadership activities and scholarship opportunities.

“Rick and Bonnie have set an extremely good example for all of us to follow,” Barber says. “I can’t think of a more worthy or deserving cause. Whether it is money or your time, there is no greater cause on earth for us Hereford breeders than the ability to donate to future generations.”

For Coley-Malir, the size of the donation doesn’t matter, just as long

as individuals are giving back.

“My story is no different than a lot of people’s stories,” Coley-Malir says. “We really need to support our youth so they can have the same or greater opportunities than what we had. Whether it is a \$20, \$200 or \$20,000 donation, it doesn’t matter the size. What matters is we are giving these kids a life-changing experience that will positively impact their future.” **HW**