

# A Transformation to Royalty

*Katie Nolles was crowned National Hereford Queen during the American Royal.*

by *Julie White*



It's a common story — the Hereford breed and the countless opportunities made available raising and showing cattle positively affect young people, their character and their work ethic, to name a few. Though common, youth who can attest to the industry's influence in their upbringing have their own account of the affect the Hereford breed and its breeders have made in their life. For one young woman, this story began at age 11 and has come to fruition with her being selected as National Hereford Queen.

**Hereford royalty** honored during the 2014 American Royal (l to r) are: **Brooke Jensen**, Courtland, Kan., 2013-14 National Hereford Queen; **Katie Nolles**, Bassett, Neb., 2014-15 National Hereford Queen; **Bailey McKay**, Marysville, Kan., first runner-up; **Jordan Spindle**, Moriarty, N.M., second runner-up; and **Kagny Collins**, Flanagan, Ill., Miss Congeniality.

A fifth-generation Hereford breeder, Katie Nolles, Bassett, Neb., will spend the next year in her new roles as the face of the Hereford breed and an agriculture advocate setting a positive example for young women.

"I will never forget being a little girl who researched the National Queen program and closely monitored the woman in white," Katie says. "What an impact she made on my life. I plan to uphold the excitement that young ladies have by investing personally in each one whom I interact with and always showing that I am excited to be wherever this journey may take me."

Katie was crowned the 2014-15 National Hereford Queen prior to the selection of the champion Hereford bull during the 2014 American Royal National Hereford Show on Nov. 2 in Kansas City, Mo.

Katie competed against nine other young women from across the U.S. for the title. The National Hereford Queen Program is managed by the National Hereford Women. Queen candidates are evaluated on their involvement with and knowledge of the Hereford breed, behavior, attitude, appearance and interaction with producers, as well as their résumés and interviews. Judges look for a responsible, well-rounded

young lady who is willing to spend an entire year traveling all over the country to represent the Hereford breed to her best ability.

First runner-up honors went to Bailey McKay, Marysville, Kan.; second runner-up was Jordan Spindle, Moriarty, N.M.; and Kagny Collins, Flanagan, Ill., was selected as Miss Congeniality.

## Growing with Herefords

Katie is the 17-year-old daughter of Mike and Trudy Nolles, who live on a Hereford ranch in the Nebraska Sandhills. Katie's mother was a state Hereford queen, and her mother's queen experience first piqued Katie's interest in the role.

"I was a pretty shy and quiet little girl until I started showing cattle," Katie says. "And even then, since I didn't start showing until I was 11, I felt I was behind the kids who were my age. So I would research and pull out old issues of the *Hereford World* to try to learn everything I could. I remember the day I found an article about a young lady who served as the national queen and on the national junior board and thinking that would be a pretty cool opportunity to serve the breed in both of those ways."



When Katie attended her first Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in 2008, hosted in Kansas City, her mom signed her up for the mentor program. “Miss Kirbie Day from Texas was my mentor and that year she went on to be crowned the National Polled Hereford Queen,” Katie says. “That gave me the inspiration and drive to see that there are so many opportunities available to me within this breed. And it really pushed me to get out there and serve others.”

Katie says as she progressed through the ranks of the junior Hereford association, she made friends who became like family and gained the confidence that allowed her to pursue the queen program. “The support has been just unbelievable,” she explains. “Growing up, I cannot believe the transformation this has caused me in the amount of time since I have been showing.”

### An ambassador for the breed

Looking toward the upcoming year, Katie takes on being an ambassador for the breed with pride and looks forward to working with breeders and promoting Herefords to commercial cattlemen. “It’s important for people to recognize our breed for not only its docility and excellent maternal traits, but also for performance,” she says. “Several studies have proven Hereford genetics are powerful. The Hereford breed is the total package.”

In addition to representing breeders, Katie says as National Hereford Queen, she is a role model to young girls and hopes to always be poised and genuinely kind.

“I would encourage all young ladies who are interested in becoming a state queen or the National Hereford Queen to look into their state associations and see if they offer a princess program, sweetheart program or some other way to be involved with royalty at a young age to help them get their feet wet and learn about the whole process,” Katie says. “Take as many chances as you can to get out and meet the breeders who you will one day be representing.”



Brooke Jensen, 2013-14 National Hereford Queen crowns Katie prior to the selection of champion bull at the American Royal National Hereford Show.

Katie adds that participating in the JNHE is a valuable experience and helps young ladies prepare for the queen program. At the age of 10, Katie committed to becoming a leader in the Hereford breed and has since attended seven JNHEs and two Program for Reaching Individuals Determined to Excel (PRIDE) Conventions. She has participated in numerous contests at the JNHE and was a member of the 2012 champion senior team marketing and the 2014 champion Hereford bowl teams. She has also placed first in illustrated speech in both the junior and intermediate age divisions.

Katie is a member of the Nebraska Junior Hereford Association and is currently in her second term on its board of directors. She is very involved in 4-H and FFA and has held offices in both organizations in addition to participating in contests on the local, state and national levels.

Currently Katie is a senior at Rock County High School and plans to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to major in animal science and agriculture education and to minor in leadership and entrepreneurship. Hereford cattle remain in Katie’s future as she intends to return to her family ranch to raise registered Herefords, teach agriculture and, one day, have a career as a leadership coach for an agriculture based company.

### Making a difference

Katie has a few goals in mind to accomplish during her reign. “I would like to continue to grow the interest and support for the queen program for the girls hoping to run someday and for the breeders who support it,” she says.

“I want everyone to know whether it’s a little girl who looks up to me in the barn, or an established breeder, I am here for them 100% to represent and help them in any way I can. Whether that’s giving them a kind word, or helping out at their sale or their show, I’m just here to do anything I can for them. I look forward to being able to meet the breeders and represent the breeders who have helped shape me into the person I am today.” **HW**



Katie is a fifth-generation Hereford breeder from both sides of her family. Her parents Mike and Trudy Nolles, Bassett, Neb., were in Kansas City as she competed for National Hereford Queen. Pictured (l to r) are Trudy, Katie and Mike Nolles.