

# More Than a Crown and Sash

*Annah Dobson has high aspirations for her year as National Hereford Queen.*

by Kayla M. Wilkins

Tears welled up in her grandfather's eyes and the excitement from her family was contagious as Annah Dobson, Johnson Creek, Wis., daughter of Roger and Rachelanne Dobson, was crowned the 2016-17 National Hereford Queen Oct. 30 at the American Royal National Hereford Show in Kansas City, Mo.

Although appearing calm to most, Dobson recalls her heart almost beating out of her chest as she awaited the announcement. In that moment, all her hard work and dedication to the Hereford breed paid off in a big way.

"That just meant the world to me, because not only did I know I made my family proud," she says, "but I made the state of Wisconsin proud, and I did something that I've always dreamed about."

Dobson knew on that day she was soon to embark on a journey she would never forget. She has always looked up to the national queen, and she says it seems surreal she is now stepping into those shoes.

"I've always seen her as a figure that's more than just someone that



stands in the backdrops and walks in classes," she explains.

## The Hereford bug

At the ripe age of 8, Dobson knew her passion was in the cattle barn. That year her grandparents, owners of Gari-Alan Farm, first introduced her to the Hereford scene with a show steer, and the excitement for the cattle industry grew rapidly.

"My grandfather gave me my first Hereford steer when I was in third grade," she says. "I showed and I absolutely loved it. From then on I caught the Hereford bug."

She soon found herself purchasing cows on her own and spending her

summers at the end of a show halter. In addition to her love growing for the breed, it also spread like wildfire through her family. Dobson said, much like other Hereford families, her family spends its vacations at cattle shows now and her brother even showed at his first junior national this summer.

"Sharing this love of Hereford cattle not only with my grandparents and my uncle, but with my brother and my parents is something that means a lot to me. This is something I want to do for the rest of my life," she says.

Dobson's enthusiasm for Herefords didn't stop with the cattle alone. She says the opportunity to work with veterans in the industry, as well as young showmen, has been rewarding in itself.

She is thankful each day for the investment the Hereford family has made in her life, and because of that, her investment in the industry didn't end in the showing.

Her name can be seen on rosters for the state junior board, in the books as a past princess and, most recently, as state queen last year. She says she attributes much of her success to her family.

"Without them I wouldn't be able to do the things I've done," Dobson explains. "They've done so much for me and have taught me so many things



Dobson, pictured (l to r) with her family moments after being crowned; her grandparents Gary and Marilyn Reinke; her mother, Rachelanne Dobson; and her uncle, Nathan Reinke.

with hard work and communication and leadership. They're always there for me no matter what."

### Road to the crown

While she served as a princess in her state association, Dobson recalls some vital role models that paved her journey to being the national queen. Nikki Folkman was the state queen during her first year as princess, and Dobson vividly remembers looking up to the influence Folkman had on not only herself but also other young girls across the nation.

Dobson always loved the idea of running for national queen someday but never dreamed it would indeed happen. After much encouragement from Folkman, her state advisor and family, Dobson prepared to take a chance to pursue her dreams.

"I looked up to those girls in the white," she says. "They've been role models to me. Now it's my turn to be a role model for someone else. That is just the greatest feeling ever."

Dobson says even with the application and interview, the road to the crown was very rewarding in numerous ways. Being an inherently outgoing young lady, it was no surprise that meeting people and hearing everyone's stories was a highlight for her.

"I like to hear everybody else's stories," she explains, "because Herefords have impacted me. I know I'm not the only one with a unique story and that's why I like hearing everybody else's. That is something that I really took away from being with them in Kansas City."

In fact, her week in its entirety was full of experiences that confirmed her desire to play an integral part in the junior association in the coming year.

"The people in the American Hereford Association (AHA)," she explains, "whether it's in our state or across the nation, are some of the most supporting loving people out there. This breed has the best people around. I can't say or stress that enough because it's been an amazing opportunity and I've not even been queen for a week."

### Making a mark

The freshman agricultural marketing and communications major from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls knows her long-term goals are to raise Hereford cattle with her family and to be an advocate for the industry. Coincidentally, she says her new role as queen aligns perfectly.

"My goal is to get people to understand the livestock industry and explain to them, not only what I do and what it means to be the national queen, but what it means to be a part of the AHA," she says. "That's something that really means a lot to me. I want to break the stereotype, and go out there and put a new twist on what it means to be the national queen. That's something I'm very excited to do."

Dobson adds that while she has grown up in the industry and does know a fair amount about Hereford cattle, she is always eager to learn more and to grow as an advocate. Her experiences already have proven that this year will come not only with the opportunity to teach others and to be a role model but also with the opportunity to learn and to grow as an individual.

"I have learned so much about the Hereford breed," she explains. "I feel like I know so much more than I did before even this week. Regardless of the competition aspect, I would have been so thrilled to know all the information and have met the people that I met along the way."



Taylor Belle Matheny crowns Dobson as the National Hereford Queen at the 2016 American Royal in Kansas City, Mo.

The opportunities with which she has been presented are only the tip of the iceberg of what is to come for Dobson this year. As a matter of fact, it has been a mainstay on her bucket list to attend all the national shows, and in this role, she will get to mark that experience off the list. By her attendance, she hopes to strike individuals as more than a pretty face at the backdrop. She aspires to serve as a face of the industry and, most importantly, as a role model to youth stepping into the showing.

"My parents have helped put goals and dreams in my life and that has made my life so much better," she says. "If I can make that impact in one girl — to give her hope, to give her dreams, to give her the idea that maybe what she wants to do isn't so silly because I did it, that would make me the happiest person ever. I want someone else to have the opportunities that I have thus far and do the things that I've done because of how much it's impacted my life." **HW**



Hereford royalty honored during the 2016 American Royal (l to r) are: Taylor Belle Matheny, Mays Lick, Ky., 2015-16 National Hereford Queen; Annah Dobson, Johnson Creek, Wis., 2016-17 National Hereford Queen; Montana Lawrence, Princeton, Minn., first runner-up; Megan Anderson, Long Eddy, N.Y., second runner-up; and Stephanie Golightly, Bellville, Texas, Miss Congeniality.