

Youth Movement | A Tough Farewell



by *Kelsey Stimpson and Jessica Middleswarth*

It seems like just yesterday we were pacing outside the conference room in Harrisburg, Pa., preparing to give our final speeches. Our nerves were high, but the thought of receiving that maroon jacket gave us the courage to give the final speech.

We will never forget the night of the banquet. The stress was high, and we both had knots in our stomach. Time kept dragging on, and we both prayed that Keysto Stotz, a retiring National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board member, would talk a little faster. No matter the outcome, we both wanted the banquet to be over and to hear the final result

of who would receive a coveted maroon jacket.

Finally, American Hereford Association (AHA) Director of Junior Activities Amy Cowan took her place at the podium, which meant she was about to announce the new group of NJHA directors.

Remembering the start

Kelsey was joined by her mom, Katie; uncle, Mark; and friend, Dana, that night. When Amy started to speak, Kelsey's mom squeezed her hand. As Kelsey looked around the room watching the retiring directors, she hoped and prayed that one would walk her way. She spotted retiring director Courtney Tribble hugging her father and sister just across the room. As Courtney walked toward Kelsey, Kelsey's heart completely sank. Courtney walked right by her, and Kelsey was overcome with devastation. Just as Kelsey thought it was over, Courtney turned around, smiled and handed Kelsey her maroon jacket.

On the other side of the room, Jessica was filled with the same suspense as she watched retiring director Shelby Rogers come toward her. Around the room, Jessica noticed that three other candidates already received a jacket, meaning there was only one spot left. As Shelby walked past Jessica's table, Jessica's family comforted her as they all thought she hadn't received one of the four spots. It was at that moment Shelby crept up behind Jessica, jacket in hand.

That night, neither of us knew what the next three years would bring. Fast-forward three years, as NJHA chairman and vice chairman, we reflect on our time spent on the board, beginning with all the

fun memories. Just a few weeks after getting on the junior board, we traveled to Tulsa, Okla., for our summer meetings before the Faces of Leadership Conference.

Before a long day of meetings, we were able to spend some time getting to know the other board members. The sun was out, the lake was beautiful and everyone was excited for a fun day on the water. And then came the aftermath of aloe-covered and second-degree burns. Our skin was comparable to that of a lobster, and we thought poor Taryn Adcock was going to burst into flames, barely being able to put on pants the next day. We spent almost 12 hours on the lake that day, and, consequently, a few of us may have failed to reapply sunscreen (sorry, Mom).

Making memories

Another favorite memory while serving on the board was zip lining across the Palo Duro Canyon in Amarillo, Texas, last summer. For all of you at home that think our board is filled with courageous dare devils, trust us when we say getting everyone to go across the canyon was not an easy task.

As new boardie initiation, we felt it was only fair to make Austin Matheny go across the canyon first. For as macho as Austin looks, we all thought he'd be the thrill seeker of the group but, boy, were we wrong. His legs were shaking, and we all quickly learned Austin's biggest fear is heights. However, after some encouragement from the team, he took the leap and sailed across the canyon. Following Austin's lead, the group lined up behind him and each took his/her turn through the canyon.



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While serving on the board, we have been fortunate enough to travel to some extraordinary places. This past fall, we were able to attend The Harvest II, hosted by the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) in California's beautiful wine country. Coming from Idaho and Wyoming, this was definitely a nice change of scenery and climate. The view was absolutely stunning, but being able to interact with Hereford breeders throughout the country was even more rewarding.

We both agree while serving on the board, one of our favorite parts has been planning and participating in the Faces of Leadership Conference. From Arkansas to Colorado to Texas, we have seen many different operations and scenery while being able to meet some remarkable junior members. Growing up, we always considered this conference to be a highlight of the summer not only because we get to see friends from across the country but because we are able to gain unique experiences and leadership skills that we can use in all aspects of our life.

Juniors, especially, should take advantage of every opportunity within the industry, and one of the best ways to do so is to participate in as many Faces of Leadership Conferences as possible. We can both speak from experience skills gained at these events have helped us get through many obstacles in life, whether they were related to college or even searching for a job.

People often ask, "What have you gotten the most out of while serving on the board?" Hands down, we can confidently say the people we have met and the friends we have made are irreplaceable. One of our duties as board members is traveling to state and regional shows throughout the spring and summer. We have traveled from Washington to Texas to Massachusetts, meeting and making new friends across the nation. These experiences and friendships wouldn't have been possible without the junior board.

A few words of thanks

While serving, we have had the privilege to work with some of the most outstanding people in the industry. In particular, our influential

advisors serve as the backbone of our success. Guiding us through tough times and being there to celebrate our victories, these individuals have truly made an everlasting impact on our lives. To Cliff and Pat Copeland, Kyle and Jodi McMillian, Bob and Jami Goble, Andy and Betsy Beck, and Max Stotz, we want to personally thank you for touching our lives and mentoring us throughout our years on the board.

We would like to personally thank all of the AHA staff, especially Amy Cowan and Bailey Clanton, who have put in countless hours to make our three years on the board nothing short of great. We call them our fearless leaders, the ones who continually put up with our crazy group while pushing us to make the greatest influence on our junior association.

We call the junior board a family, and that is exactly what we would consider us. Spending countless hours in a board room debating on junior nationals will always give an individual a different perspective of someone. We have experienced different states and different shows and have all become far too familiar with the different showrings across the nation.

Together, we have been through sunburns from the lake, half-day-long layovers and have all experienced the dreadful pain after working the showring for 12 hours. We have been through thick and thin, ups and downs, and the best three years of our lives with one another. Before running for the board we might have been strangers to one another, but coming out of it all we truly are a big family.

Last but not least, we would like to thank every single member of the NJHA for making our term on the board more than we could have ever asked for. Thank you for allowing us to serve your association, and thank you for personally changing our lives. We feel very fortunate to be a part of the best junior association in the country, and serving as your chairman and vice chairman has been the most rewarding experience. **HW**