

A Labor of Love

Duo Kent and Diana Barnes recognized as Advisors of the Year.

by *Haley Stark*

Dedicated service, humble leadership and a passion for youth are just a few of the many traits Oklahoma advisors Kent and Diana Barnes embody. The countless hours they have invested into the Junior Hereford Association of Oklahoma (JHAO) have influenced Oklahoma's Hereford youth. For their dedication to Hereford youth, Kent and Diana were honored as Advisors of the Year, July 19, at the 18th VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Louisville, Ky.

"Kent and Diana have been a major support system in our state organization for well over 10 years and advisors for about five years after that," says JHAO member Miranda Stotz. "The state of Oklahoma has been fortunate enough to have many exceptional state advisors over the years but Kent and Diana are by far a couple that goes above and beyond the call every time."

Just Hereford people

For as long as Kent can remember, Herefords have been part of the picture. His grandfather, father and family were Hereford breeders. He says he was born into the Hereford industry, and once his children, KC and Hallie, got involved, he saw no reason to change. Kent was an area livestock specialist at Oklahoma State University (OSU) until he retired in 2010 and has served as a director for the Oklahoma Hereford Association and coached many meat judging teams.

Diana, originally from Maryland, comes from an equine background and offers a wealth of knowledge to junior members. She keeps all contest and JNHE information organized and, according to Stotz, it's not uncommon to see Diana carrying a huge binder holding the answer to every question about any contest or event at the JNHE.



Kent and Diana Barnes, Hulbert, Okla., were recognized as Advisors of the Year. Pictured (l to r) are Diana, Hallie, KC and Kent Barnes.

For both Kent and Diana it was natural for them to step into the advisor role. With the encouragement of the previous advisors, Kent and Diana found their niche, contributing to the success of Oklahoma youth and promoting the Hereford breed.

Today, the Barnes family has a ranch in Hulbert, Okla., where they run a small herd of Herefords for their kids, both currently students at OSU.

Going above and beyond

Kent and Diana attended their first JNHE in 2009 in Tulsa, Okla. At the time they were just starting out, but their children quickly fell in love with showing Herefords.

Today, it's common to see Kent and Diana aiding junior members at numerous shows, including the Oklahoma Youth Expo Hereford show and the JNHE every year.

"Diana has probably baked thousands of batches of her famous chocolate chip cookies and brewed just as many pots of coffee," Stotz explains. "If that is not enough, the Barnes's are at the barns around 4 a.m. every morning at the JNHE to make sure it's ready when we get there."

Stotz notes how crucial the Barnes family is to the success of Oklahoma youth and that they're often out of the spotlight, ensuring every aspect of a show runs smoothly. Even though their children did not show at the past several

JNHEs, Kent and Diana were still in attendance, working tirelessly for their junior members. Stotz admires their dedication and personable attitude, going the extra mile to know all their members by name despite the size of the organization.

Stotz also speaks of their meticulous preparation and coordination for every contest. "They run through all the team and individual sales speeches

with the kids," Stotz says. "They make sure the quiz bowl team is extensively prepared far in advance, the grill-off team has everything they could possibly need, all speech contestants are prepared, all judging contestants are accounted for and somehow manage to get all of our massive state to the backdrop for the state picture."

For Kent and Diana, however, it's all part of the job they love. "When we first started out as advisors, we had a lot to learn, but we were eager to learn, and we had a lot of people that helped us," Kent says. Now the couple attends almost every junior event, taking detailed notes at those events in order to be more prepared for the following year.

They both speak fondly not only of the connections they've made but also of the network their junior members create as they get to know more Hereford people. "Our junior really are Hereford enthusiasts, they get out and push the Hereford breed from all aspects, not just from the show ring," Diana says. "They now know people from all over the United States just by being involved in this."

Moving forward, Kent and Diana plan to continue promoting their association and to stimulate membership growth. Above all, they hope to encourage more juniors to branch out and to get involved in more contest activities and learning opportunities on the national level. **HW**