

by **Steven Green**

Nearly two years ago, preparation for summer 2017 began. Strategies were arranged and breeding decisions were made. Producer across America were planning to have their best calf crop yet.

Nine months later dreams came to fruition, and the conversations were sparked. Juniors across the country began the hunt for their next show heifer and future cow. Elite calves began to sort themselves from the rest, bred-and-owned projects were chosen and calves were purchased.

As cattle arrived at show barns, dreams were blooming, and the hard work began. For more than 900 exhibitors, daily routine and attention to detail paved the way for one event — the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE).

This year's JNHE was anticipated to be the greatest in Hereford history. Sure enough, our National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members did not disappoint — more than 1,300 head of Hereford cattle arrived in Louisville, Ky.

In our opening ceremonies, Warren Beeler said, "The most valuable agricultural product isn't plants or animals, it's people." JNHE is an exhibition of Hereford cattle from across the country, but success in the showring is only a fraction of what we hope to achieve. Our juniors take hold of their future and lay a blueprint for success, competing in numerous contests and escaping their comfort zone.

Between the hard work of managing a show string and participating in events, juniors have the opportunity to network. Conversations begin, thoughts are shared and friendships are made. Speaking and connecting with youth is my favorite part of the JNHE.

The days began to pass and show days came knocking. With the selection of champions comes disappointment for those who were not awarded. Through the gloom, a quote from Rocky Balboa is appropriate, "Every champion was once a contender that refused to give up." Nothing worth having in life comes easy, including success. Perseverance is in the heart of every champion. Whether you are running for the NJHA board of directors or participating in a contest, losing hurts. How you handle the adversity will define who you are.

I ran for the NJHA board twice and came back the second time stronger, more confident and more prepared for a leadership position. For those of you who were not happy with your placing in contests and the showring, stand tall and begin preparing for tomorrow with a champion's mentality.

## Faces of Leadership Conference

Two weeks past the JNHE, 90 juniors from across the country gathered in Kansas City, Mo., for the Faces of Leadership Conference. We began our time together with Amberley Snyder, who guided us through the peaks and valleys of her life which included becoming paralyzed from the waist down from a car accident. With the dream of riding horses again, she took hold of the one thing she could control — her attitude. Amberley is now competitively riding again and is better than ever.

Later we took a tour of the American Hereford Association headquarters and headed to Kansas State University (K-State) for a look at its beef unit and a leadership training course. Our youth got a hands-on experience with K-State staff before heading to Jensen Bros. in Courtland, Kan. A sincere thank you goes out to the Jensen family for their gracious hospitality.

We concluded our conference's final day starting at BioZyme Inc. Bob and Lisa Norton are immensely supportive of the livestock industry youth. BioZyme staff let us into their feed supplement mill and headquarters to teach youth about logistics, product development, sales and delivery. Lastly, Faces of Leadership ended with a leadership training session led by Heather Schultz. NJHA youth learned different strategies from team building activities to take back to organizations which they are involved in.

As summer comes to a close, I ask everyone to take a second to reflect on what the NJHA has provided for you. I cannot say enough for the influence the Hereford family has had on my life. Eight years ago I purchased my first Hereford heifer. Who knew one handshake would lead to this journey. **HW**



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