

A Lasting Legacy

Bob Schaffer of Deer Track Farm announces his generous donation to the Hereford Youth Foundation of America.

by Kayla Jennings

Crafted impeccably on a three by four piece of plywood, “The Old Homestead” boasted a variety of farm animals and a bungalow home landscaped to perfection according to his grandfather’s stories. Little did Bob Schaffer know his grand prize high school science fair project would become reality years later.

After 38 years of hard work and dedication to building his dream from the ground up, Deer Track Farm is “a country club for cows,” as Bob would affectionately describe it.

The farm lies in Spotsylvania County in the northeast part of Virginia. While Bob cherishes Deer Track Farm, he recognizes the farm will not be in production forever; however, its legacy can. Bob has announced he is leaving his estate to the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) to put toward scholarship money for youth.

“I wasn’t born into legacy agriculture,” he explains. “I built my farm from scratch, so just as I was not born into agriculture, I have

no one to pass what I have built on to. I have adopted agriculture and I like kids, so I thought a scholarship would be the best thing.”

Chasing a dream

Bob grew up in a city in Maryland, but he frequently visited his grandfather, who grew up living on “The Old Homestead.” He remembers long talks with his grandfather about family in Pennsylvania and their small farms.

It was those stories that prompted Bob to carry a fondness for the agriculture industry with him as he grew up, served in the Navy and later joined the workforce in computer technology. His grandfather’s great influence on his life is responsible for his desire to pave his way in the agricultural industry.

“I fell in love with the concept,” he recalls, “and I wanted the same for myself.”

In 1979 Bob decided it was time to fully pursue his lifelong dream of adopting the country



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Virginia Hereford breeder Bob Schaffer recognizes the importance of education and wants to help Hereford youth pursuing college.

lifestyle. He purchased 22 acres in Virginia with five acres of hard wood, 14 acres of pine trees, three acres of brush and a beaver pond. He remembers the long days spent clearing the property with a chainsaw, a lawnmower and an ax.

“After a few months my father came to check out my purchase,” Bob says. “I could see in his eyes he thought I was nuts. It was another year before he came back, and when he saw the progress I made I couldn’t get rid of him.”

Fast forward just a few years, and Bob purchased his first calves in the spring of 1993. He planned to sell them in the fall, but that purchase led to his next venture as a cow-calf operator. It was not until 1996 that he became a purebred Hereford breeder.

However, reflecting on the early days, Bob says he would not have changed a thing. With the help of neighbors, friends and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, Deer Track Farm has grown exponentially over the last 38 years in acreage and head of cattle — he is now the third largest Hereford breeder in the state.

“The journey from a childhood dream inspired by my grandfather, to getting the first piece of land, to building a homestead and being blessed to expand beyond the original dream is complete,” he notes. “Today, the only task at hand is to enjoy the farm and raise the best Hereford cattle we can.”

Just as his farm grew and his passion for Hereford cattle grew, Bob’s involvement in the Virginia Hereford Association did, as well. He soon found himself on the state board and then as the state association president. Bob says he enjoyed bringing a fresh perspective to the association by implementing progressive ideas.

It was because of his efforts in creating the Virginia Hereford Association Bull Development Program, along with others in leadership, that the sale has increased in numbers and adopted a junior show.



The total donation to HYFA developed from the Deer Track Farm estate will be approximately \$1 million.



After Bob became a purebred Hereford breeder in 1996, he quickly became involved as a board member then as the state association president.

“Early on my heart was in supporting kids because they are our future,” he notes.

For him it was rewarding to see the youth and senior memberships both grow in the adoption of the new, progressive ideas that were implemented while he served on the board. He says the junior show provided premiums for youth as an incentive to learn more about the cattle industry within the state. It was unique to any other previous programs.

Giving back

As a result of many years of being involved in state association leadership and spearheading youth programs, it was clear leaving his estate

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Bob's progressive nature initiated implementing ideas like the Virginia Hereford Association Bull Development Program and a junior show in their state.

to put toward a scholarship fund was the best answer. Bob recognizes the importance of education and wants nothing more than to support youth in pursuing theirs.

"Education is their future," he explains. "The more they apply themselves to learning and apply energy to their endeavors, the more successful they will be."

In addition to his passion for Hereford youth, specifically in his region, he has another factor to consider. Bob's son, John William, was a bright young man aspiring to be a lawyer before he was taken from this Earth as the victim of a brain tumor. The scholarships developed from Bob's estate are a way to honor his son's life, as well as to aid Hereford youth in accomplishing their goals.

"He would have been my legacy. He was making something out of his life by going to college and applying himself, so that is part of what was in my mind and heart," he explains. "Part of this donation was for the kids I don't have now."

The total donation will be approximately \$1 million. It is expected the scholarships will equate to \$50,000 per year. Three students will receive a scholarship each year for \$2,500 for four years while pursuing a bachelor's degree in any area of study.

Bob says it is important to him that all students who dedicated their youth to agriculture in his area be eligible for these scholarships regardless of their career path.

Additionally, the fund will allow students pursuing a graduate degree in agriculture an opportunity to receive scholarship money. Each year there will be two students awarded a one-time scholarship of \$10,000.

Ideally, the scholarships will be awarded to students from Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina because of Bob's involvement in that



From purchasing land to building a homestead, Bob Schaffer says his original dream is complete. Today, his goal is to enjoy his farm and raise the best Hereford cattle possible.

region. However, if there are not eligible students from those three states, Bob says the scholarships will then be open to the rest of the National Junior Hereford Association members.

"I want to try and do something for the people and the families I work with," he notes. "When I got into the cattle business, I stepped into a brand new world. I was welcomed into this business by a bunch of people. They are just wonderful. They really are. I just fell in love with this world as well as the cattle."

Just as he has adopted the industry, the industry adopted him by way of helping hands and

lifelong friendships.

Once his journey is over in the cattle industry, Bob hopes these scholarships will help students as they embark on new journeys just as he had help chasing his dream.

"Everybody wants to leave their mark in the world," he says. "I worked hard, and I have been blessed. If I can pass that on in a positive way, then that is a good deal and I can rest comfortably." **HW**

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