

by **Bailey McKay**

## From Making Memories to a Final Farewell

Writing my final article as a National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board member has given me the opportunity to reflect on my personal path to becoming a director and the valuable experiences I have had in this position.

Throughout high school, I held leadership roles in local and state organizations like 4-H, FFA and the Kansas and Nebraska Junior Hereford Associations. These organizations helped me develop the organizational and communication skills I would need to successfully serve on the national board. My desire to become a board member developed during my senior year of high school. I realized



that a position on the board would open up opportunities for me to learn more about the Hereford breed, to meet breeders from across the nation and to become a mentor for youth.

I discussed my interest in running with my family who encouraged me to get a year of college under my belt first. As I waited, I suffered a major family loss. I remember thinking of a list of people I could always go to or call anytime, and the majority of that list consisted of people I met through the NJHA. After that, I was bound and determined to become one of the twelve in the maroon jackets. I wanted to serve the youth and to become the person they looked to when seeking advice or needing a question answered.

That year the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) was in Grand Island, Neb. Normal interviews in a typical conference room with two interviewers are intimidating, but being interviewed by twelve people in a glamorous ranch-style conference room was intense. The part I enjoyed the most through the selection process was being able to speak twice with the junior delegates. It was easy to be myself and to let the chips land where they might.

However, the most terrifying moment was when the awards night rolled around that week. I swear, retiring NJHA president, Brady Jensen, was speaking in slow motion all evening. Finally, Amy Cowan took the microphone and the retiring board members exited the stage. Brady strode purposefully to his family only stopping to give Brooke his jacket before hugging his parents. I watched Kristen and Elise hug their families and

head to Steven Green and Mason Blinson — in this time I managed to lose track of Jason May. Unlike the other candidates, I chose to sit in the grandstands on the first row between my mom and dad so I could see everything. The next thing I knew, I heard Sue Rowland gasp. I turned to find Jason standing behind me with his jacket in one hand and a crooked smile on his face.

Since that day, my family that I once thought had dwindled to three has grown to well over 3,000. In three years, I've traveled to more states than I can count on my fingers, along with making memories with friends that soon became family. These travels have taken me to Colorado State University, where I sat in the coolest Hereford hide leather chairs, the Harvest II Gala in beautiful Sonoma, Calif., and my first baseball game at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City, Mo.

It has been said that the Hereford family is the best of all the breeds. I may be a bit biased, but I couldn't agree more. In the past three years, many of you have shaped me into the person I am. You have given encouragement, advice, meals, hugs and so much more. I will forever be grateful to you all. There used to be a time when I could walk my heifer to and from the wash rack and only talk to whoever was washing with me that day. Now I can't even imagine walking down my aisle without being stopped at least once. Thank you to the entire NJHA membership and your families for including me in your fold and taking me as I am.

My biggest thank-you goes to my parents for making sure I always have everything I need — including going back to the hotel to get my clothes, caring for my



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heifers, dealing with me as I travel and everything else in between.

To Cliff and Pat Copeland, Andy and Betsy Beck, Max Stotz and Kyle Pérez — thank you for always taking my calls as I sought advice on one topic or another. A special thank you to Betsy for the care packages. To Amy and Bailey, thank

you for being the literal and proverbial backbone, not to mention our fearless leaders. We sure couldn't have made all of our improvements to the NJHA without you.

To all the "boardies" I've had the pleasure of serving with, we've had a heck of a ride, and I wouldn't dream

of having gone through this journey with any other group. To those members who are thinking about running for the board, do it! It is a life altering experience. **HW**

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## Passion, Dedication, Tradition: Redefined

by *Mason Blinson*

Passion, dedication and tradition are the three words I used when campaigning for the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors. I grew up with a passion to show Hereford cattle, a dedication to work hard each and every day to have success in the showring, and a great family with tradition in the Hereford industry. These three words have been my driving force and have now developed a new meaning in my life because of the NJHA board of directors.

I have a strong passion for showing Hereford cattle because of the opportunities and resources it provides. A passion for showing livestock means so much more than leading an animal into a ring. Showing livestock has introduced me to leadership, advocacy, industry knowledge and much more. I have become a better leader in my role as an NJHA director. Being on the junior board has provided me the opportunity to help youth, as did those that served before me, and allowed me to be a leader and spokesperson for the Hereford breed.

Before I was on the board, my purpose was to be like the people in the maroon jackets and to have juniors look up to me the way I looked up to the board. Now that I am on the board, my purpose is to reach the expectations and high standards I held for those on the board when I was younger. I have developed my passion for Hereford cattle into a passion for advocacy of the industry to our youth.



Hands down, the most rewarding thing about being on the NJHA board is getting the opportunity to work with juniors from all over the country. I have been able to interact with juniors

in so many ways that would have been impossible without being on the NJHA board. It's rewarding to see juniors in the barn working hard to get their cattle ready, leading them in the showring to show off all of their hard work and seeing them later in life as a close friend and part of the Hereford family.

Serving as an NJHA director has allowed me the opportunity to gain responsibility and decision-making skills as I start to run my own events and to travel across the country. In addition, I gained confidence and knowledge by talking to established Hereford breeders.

As I get more involved in the Hereford breed, I meet more producers and gain more mentors. I have learned so much from our amazing advisors: the McMillans; the Copelands; the Becks; Max Stotz; and Kyle Pérez; as well as Amy Cowan and Bailey Clanton as the boss ladies of the junior board. I am so thankful for these people, along with countless others in the Hereford industry, who have taken me in as part of their family and served as mentors throughout my junior years.

Thanks to people in the industry for the opportunities I have been provided. I learn something new which I take home and utilize at every

show or Hereford event to which I go. I completely believe work behind the scenes is ten times more important than show day. This is something I have proven while on the board. So much goes into putting on a show and planning events for juniors. The important part is not how well you do on show day — it is the skills learned and memories made by each and every junior.

Being on the NJHA board has made me a more driven, hardworking and dedicated person. I would not change that for anything. After three years of serving the NJHA and its growing membership, I hope to use the skills I have acquired and the people I have met along the way for my future role in the agriculture industry. Being a part of one of the largest youth livestock organizations in the country has provided countless opportunities.

Since 2015, I have traveled the country alongside other Hereford juniors, who have become some of my closest friends, to promote the organization, to plan shows and conferences, and to educate youth about the Hereford breed.

Along with my fellow retiring board members, I hope to have a positive impact and leave the NJHA better than we found it. Although our terms end in July at the 2018 Junior National Hereford Expo in Grand Island, Neb., where it all started, we are excited to take on a new role in the Hereford industry and to give back to the organization that has given us so much. **HW**