

by **Steven Green**

Looking into the Rearview

There is a certain feeling that follows individuals as they “grow up.” Each year we become older, wiser and closer to the dreams we are chasing. However, on the day we add another digit to our age, we never feel any older than the day, weeks or months before. Just like that, life seems to fly by in the blink of an eye. We really do not see how far we have come until we reach pinnacles in our life. Middle school, high school, college, careers, marriage and children bring us to moments where we cannot help taking a trip down memory lane. As I come to the close of my career as a National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) member and director, I want to look back at the choices that determined the past 10 years.



Choose the breed

My love for Hereford cattle started at first sight. Cliché as it sounds, I was overwhelmed with an immediate love for the breed. Ten years ago I was “learning to walk” in regards to showing cattle. I knew very little about selection, nutrition and daily care, but I did know I loved cattle and would own a Hereford one day.

Thanks to an opportunity afforded by my parents, I made the decision to purchase a Hereford heifer. This choice led me to find the true meaning of responsibility and diligence. It also led to my first experience of debt, but, thankfully, the Bank of Mom and Dad offered an extremely low interest rate.

Between show premiums and weed eating fences, it was not long until the heifer was paid for, and I was the proud owner of a red and white beauty. My family sacrificed money and time so we could travel all over the state showing this heifer.

Fast forward a couple of years, my family and I marched north from Kentucky to Indianapolis to have our eyes opened to a whole new world — the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). It was more than we could have ever imagined. The cattle, the people and the atmosphere quickly accelerated my passion to raise Hereford cattle.

Choose to lead

There was a group of young adults walking around in maroon coats, and I carefully watched how they interacted with fellow juniors. In my eyes, our junior board members were near superheroes. That week I made the choice to one day become a junior board member.

Finally, the time came to run for a junior board position. The first year that I ran provided a much-needed learning curve.

The first candidacy was difficult. I quickly discovered I was not prepared to become a leader of one of our world’s greatest breeds just yet. After the awards ceremony at the JNHE in 2014, I made another choice to rise above defeat and to run for the junior board once more.

A year rolled around in the blink of an eye, and we found ourselves in Grand Island, Neb. This time the junior board campaign was much more relaxed. Although I did not know it then, I was a much better candidate the second year. That JNHE ended with excitement as I reached my goal and put on the maroon jacket for the first time.

Choose your future

Here we are almost three years later, headed back to Grand Island for JNHE 2018. The maroon jacket has taken me far and wide. It has provided a Hereford family that is, indeed, second to none.

As directors, the people we meet each have a different story full of many tribulations, pinnacles and choices. Some have the opportunity to farm or ranch full-time, while others have found a career that supports their passion for the Hereford breed. With so much diversity, I find it incredible how we all unite under one common goal. The Hereford family, as well as the cattle, truly are built for the long haul.

As we tackle the future, I want to share some wisdom from Alan Ashley-Pitt, who observed, “You have two choices in life: You can dissolve into the mainstream, or you can be distinct. To be distinct, you must be different. To be different, you must strive to be what no one else can be.” My wife, Lauren, and I can’t wait for the JNHE this summer and wish everyone safe travels to Grand Island. **HW**



Chairman

Steven Green, gwherefords@yahoo.com

Vice chairman

Brooke Jensen, brookerjensen@outlook.com

Communications chair

Bailey McKay, baileymckay14@yahoo.com

Leadership chair

Brooke Hinojosa-Sidwell,
brookehinojosa10@gmail.com

Fundraising chair

Mason Blinson, mblinson@gmail.com

Membership chair

Austin Matheny, austin.matheny61@gmail.com

Directors

Rylee Barber, ryraba@gmail.com

Brandt Downing, downingshowcattle@gmail.com

Nathan Hopkins, nhopkins3632@att.net

Bailey Jones, baejones15@gmail.com

Taylor Belle Matheny,
taylormatheny97@gmail.com

Hannah Williams, hnmwilliams13@yahoo.com

Director of youth activities

Amy Cowan
P.O. Box 014059, Kansas City, MO 64101
816-842-3757, acowan@hereford.org

JrHereford.org

A Bittersweet Goodbye

by *Brooke Jensen*



It is hard to believe three years have already gone by since I first put on the famous maroon jacket. After a long-awaited day in Grand Island, Neb., my older brother, Brady, handed down the jacket to me as tears of joy ran down my face. I have thought about this article for quite some time now — what I should talk about, and what memories I should share, as the realization of retiring from the junior board stings my heart. A huge part of my life has been dedicated to the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA). My fondest memories, my favorite experiences and my closest friends have all resulted from my years of involvement in the NJHA. While I could write 10 pages about my time with the NJHA and serving as a member of its board of directors, what I really want to talk about is choices.

Choose a challenge

Every day we make decisions that affect our lives and those around us. Choices are around every corner and through every door. Some choices are harder to make than others; some, more personal and influential. I made three choices as a director that are at the forefront of my mind, and these are the three choices I ask you to make, too.

First, choose to challenge yourself. I have spoken on this topic several times throughout my term as a director. It is what I have strived to help others do through this role. Whether a junior member is 7 or 18, there are always opportunities to challenge yourself — to make yourself a better cattleman, person and leader for this industry.

Challenge yourself to continue to make breeding decisions that will keep Hereford genetics a vital part of this business. Push yourself to work hard to meet your goals inside and outside the ring. Get out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself through participation, because the skills and friendships gained through involvement in this membership are immeasurable. While my fellow board members and I have had countless memories together during the past few years, our first goal was always to challenge one another in the betterment of our breed association.

Choose to support

I have been so honored to stand next to the past and present board members of the last three years. Each of them has been remarkable, inspiring and passionate about the growth of this breed and young people — which leads me to my next key choice.

Choose to give back. Is there anything better than seeing a smile on a young person's face? I think not. This is why I decided to run for the board of directors.

I remember skating around a speed rink in Milwaukee, holding the hand of then board member Heather Thomas. I watched Heather all week and concluded I wanted to be at least half the sweet, caring and strong leader she was. It was the little things she did for me that inspired me to extend the same kindness to another member.

This world is full of opportunities and, as you seize those opportunities, always remember who helped provide them. Remember who made a difference, big or small, in your

life. One day you will be presented a chance to return that opportunity, and I hope you choose to do that. Though I am retiring from serving the NJHA as a director, I will spend the rest of my life supporting and giving back to the association that means so much to me.

Choose gratitude

Finally, choose to say thank you along the way. There is a reason to be thankful every day. Thank your parents and grandparents, your advisors and your peers. It is a blessing to be a part of this great industry, to transform the world through agriculture and to be a part of this big Hereford family.

I cannot thank the junior membership, Amy and Bailey, Jack and all the other AHA staff enough for making my time on the board a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Thank you, Sue, for always believing in me and reminding me why this time in my life is so special. Thank you, Mom, Dad, Brady, Ben and Eddie, for taking care of my cattle, for putting up with me and for supporting me in all things.

I am forever grateful I chose to apply for the board of directors. Serving the NJHA has been a ride of a lifetime. There were a lot of hard decisions to make in the midst of changes, new contest development and handling record-breaking numbers. But knowing my fellow board members and I have challenged ourselves to make meaningful decisions that will benefit junior members made it all worthwhile. So today, I choose to say thank you. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity. **HW**