

Something to Be Proud Of

This year's Junior National Hereford Expo was filled with dedicated, hardworking and talented young individuals.



Jack Ward is the executive vice president of the American Hereford Association. He can be reached at jward@hereford.org.

This issue of the *Hereford World* will be full of highlights from the 2018 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). The National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) membership continues to grow, and the JNHE is a big reason for this growth. This event has become a showcase in the industry and is looked upon by its peers as a class event that gives our youth a chance to interact with families from across the U.S. and Canada.

It certainly makes for great coffee shop talk to brag about the number of exhibitors and entries, but for me it is most inspiring to walk through the barns and to see states cooking meals, members preparing for a contest and the American Hereford Association (AHA) staff, ambassadors, interns and junior board members and candidates meeting to plan for the day. It is a well-oiled machine, and it is exciting to watch.

This is the first year in 15 years Mary Ann, my sons and I have not loaded up and headed off to a junior national. Mary Ann and I were so fortunate to see our sons compete in a variety of contests and to watch them become more self-confident each year. I was able to attend several of the contests this year at the JNHE, and I was so proud of your kids as they prepared for these various events. Their knowledge of the industry and their ability to communicate this knowledge are something each of you can be proud of.

I watched the grill-off presentations and was impressed at how the kids delivered a message on the importance of beef in a diet and their knowledge of the specifics of the Certified Hereford Beef® program. I was equally impressed with the quiz bowl competition,

where juniors showcased their knowledge of both the industry and the AHA. In both the junior and senior division championships, it came down to the very end. At the end of the championship round for both divisions, a question is asked, and the entire team gets to discuss the answer, and then they have to write the answer. I was blown away in the senior division championship, when both teams were able to correctly answer the question, “In December 2017, the AHA released an updated EPD utilizing a new genetic evaluation software. Can you name the software and two changes associated with the release?” Not only did they know the software was BOLT, but they correctly identified the abbreviation as Biometric Open Language Tools.

I also sat in on the annual meeting of the NJHA. At the start of the meeting, Shellie Collins, a past junior board member, addressed the candidates with a powerful message and provided a great historical recap of the NJHA and the importance of the election of the junior board of directors. The new board members are elected in this meeting, and this year there were 13 candidates running for the four open positions. The candidates were an outstanding group and were remarkable to listen to and to watch throughout the week.

Over the past few weeks, I have received hand written thank-you notes from juniors from across North America. It makes me proud, and it should make all of you proud. The NJHA is loaded full of talented young kids that will be advocates for our industry and our breed for decades. I want to thank everyone involved in making this year's event one to remember. **HW**