



Cowan was honored at the 2018 JNHE opening ceremonies with a beautiful Tim Cox painting, custom framed by Sandy Meyer of Classic Leather Designs.

Celebrating Two Decades with ‘Famous’

The well-known face behind Hereford youth is recognized for her years of commitment and inspiration.

by *Kendra Davis*

Amy Cowan celebrated 20 years with the American Hereford Association (AHA) on June 1, 2018. She was recognized at the 2018 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Grand Island, Neb., for her dedication to the Hereford breed. Over the years she has held many titles — “role model,” “AHA’s secret weapon” and “famous” — to name a few.

The early days

Her nicknames have been years in the making, beginning as soon as she graduated from South Dakota State University (SDSU) in 1998.

“When I graduated from college and packed my bags for Kansas City, I never dreamed that 20 years later I would still be doing what I love,” says Cowan, director of youth activities and the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) at the AHA. “I’m looking forward to the next journey with a breed and an association that has built my career and taught me so many life lessons along the way.”

Cowan started with the AHA on June 1, 1998. She has served the association in various capacities, working as the communications assistant, the national show manager and then editor of the *Hereford World*. She was later promoted as the

AHA's activities and marketing coordinator. She began her current position as the director of youth activities and foundation in 2009 and has made huge strides in building both the foundation and the membership of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA).

"I started as the communications coordinator and spent my first years identifying show photos and writing press releases," Cowan recalls. "It wasn't long before I got to attend my first junior national in Illinois. They put a camera in my hand and said take some candid for the magazine — I am pretty sure I shot 14 rolls of film on that trip and I loved every minute at the backdrop getting ears and working with the juniors and their families."

From that moment on, Cowan was hooked, and before long she was taking the show photos, managing the national shows and editing the magazine. Yet out of all positions she has occupied, her favorite is the one she holds now. Cowan has always had a passion to serve, as well as a love for event planning and fundraising. Those passions directly correspond with the work she is doing today.

"I've always loved working with different groups of people to organize events and got my start in college when I managed the SDSU rodeo," she says. "At Hereford, the first event I attended was the junior national, but I also got to plan the first Hereford Young Guns conference for the younger members and breeders that we hosted in Kansas City."

The attendees from this conference are still some of her very best friends today. She credits



Cowan was excited her whole family was able to be there for the event including her niece, Becca, and nephew, Brody.

those types of events as the main link behind the "Hereford family."

The Hereford family

Cowan's influence on youth members in the last 20 years is widespread. She has had the opportunity to see many families go through the junior program in its entirety. One of her favorite things is to see some of the first members she had a friendship with start into the Hereford breed with their kids.

Over the past 20 years, she has seen a generation of Hereford juniors grow and develop

continued on page 42...



Cowan has worked with more than 50 different board members throughout her time with the AHA — including the new 2018-19 team.



Cowan, along with HYFA's president Ray Ramsey and vice president Bruce Everhart, work together to create countless leadership, scholarship and educational opportunities for Hereford youth..

...Celebrating Two Decades with 'Famous' continued from page 41

through the association. She has worked with more than 50 different board members from 10 junior boards, as well as numerous ambassadors, interns and junior members.

"I've been fortunate enough to get to work with some amazing people," Cowan says. "Seeing kids grow up through the NJHA and become leaders in the industry is one of my favorite parts."

Keysto Stotz, Skiatook, Okla., a close Hereford family member who served on the NJHA board of directors under Cowan's direction from 2011-2014, spoke during Cowan's recognition during the JNHE.

Stotz's first memory of Cowan was in 2001 at the JNHE in Billings, Mont., while she was the *Hereford World* editor. Stotz won both the cow-calf pair show and peewee showmanship, and Cowan found Stotz in his stalls after the show to get an interview for the next issue of the magazine.

"I was pretty pumped obviously, because at 8 years old no one had ever given me an interview before. And sure enough, in the September issue, Amy Cowan's article 'Keepin' up with Keysto' was in the *Hereford World*," Stotz says. "This was my first memory of Amy. Many things have changed since Billings, but one thing I'm glad that has not changed is that Amy Cowan is still here at the AHA."

As seen on Facebook

Amy Cowan has touched the lives of many, and a few of her mentees took to social media to share their appreciation for Cowan's friendship.

Bailey Clanton:

I have racked my brain time and time again to try to find the words to describe this special lady. Six years ago, I applied for the American Hereford Association (AHA) youth activities internship; a few weeks later I got a call to come to Kansas City, Mo., for an interview. Shortly after my interview, I got offered the internship and was ecstatic to get to work with "the best in the business," as most know her as.



Funny thing about this scenario, I was also graduating that May from Kansas State University, and as much as I like to think I had my life figured out at 23, I didn't have a clue what was going to happen at the end of the summer. Needless to say, the Junior National Hereford Expo and Faces of Leadership conference came and went and my internship was coming to

an end. I remember walking into Amy's office and saying, "So what if I don't want to leave?"

Luckily it all worked out, and I can proudly say that for the last six years, I have gotten to work alongside and learn from THE Amy Cowan. And if you couldn't guess, surprising AC is quite the task, but we pulled it off! Congratulations on 20 years, my dear friend — here's to many more!

Lindsey Broek

About eight and a half years ago, I moved to Kansas City and took a job with the American Maine-Anjou Association. Green as a gourd and nervous, one of the first people I met was a lady that worked for the AHA. I had heard about this illusive person and all of the great things she had done with Hereford. I figured someone like her would never take the time to get to know little old me or be so willing to answer every question I've ever had.



Last night we surprised her with a small token of appreciation for her 20 years of dedicated service to the

Onward and upward

During her time as the director of the foundation, Cowan has overseen the growth of HYFA to reach more than \$4 million, including the implementation of the Growing a Lasting Legacy campaign that funds the JNHE, adding leadership and educational endowments and building a scholarship program that has distributed close to \$1 million to Hereford youth. She has been the driving force behind multiple fundraisers, benefits and sales to raise money for youth to receive scholarships and leadership opportunities.

However, the foundation is not the only entity that has seen substantial growth because of Cowan. She has been instrumental in the increase in membership of the junior association — in the last 10 years, membership has grown by more than 1,000 youths.

The JNHE has seen tremendous growth over the past two decades as well. Remarks are made yearly on the magnitude of the show and what an accomplishment it is to have a junior show of this caliber.

“I don’t think those fairgrounds in Billings back in 2001 could accommodate the amount of cattle the JNHE has today,” Stotz notes. “I attribute a lot of this to Amy.”

Stotz has always believed Cowan is the AHA’s secret weapon.

“Once you attend your first junior national and have a good experience, you’ll probably never

AHA. She’s the best in the business and a great mentor, but probably most important, Amy Cowan is my friend. Cheers to you, AC; you’re one of a kind.

Chris Stephens

Hereford breeders are blessed with the BEST! For 20 years Amy Cowan has given so much to so many, so it was only fitting that tonight, with her family around her, we saluted our finest



conductor for her tireless efforts. The current National Junior Hereford Association board, her former board members and her many friends presented Amy with a very small token of appreciation for 20 years of service to the AHA. Onwards and upwards!

And a shout out to Sandy at Classic Leather Designs for helping make this gift special and for all of her artistic work for many, many, many years. The BEST. **HW**



Stotz spoke during Cowan’s recognition during the 2018 JNHE and reminisced about his time on her junior board.

miss another one, and before you know it you’re a lifetime member” he says. “There is a reason this show is consecutively one of the largest junior nationals in the country, while still maintaining a family atmosphere and personal touch. I think Amy has a lot to do with that.”

Celebrating 20 years

With her endless dedication to the AHA and NJHA, a special surprise was in order for Cowan to celebrate her 20 years mark.

Without her knowledge, her closest friends and colleagues organized for her whole family to be at the event to give her a moment she could cherish forever. Surrounded by those she holds closest, Cowan was gifted a beautiful Tim Cox painting, custom framed by her dear friend Sandy Meyer of Classic Leather Designs, who has been a huge part of Hereford shows and events, designing awards, banners and special pieces throughout Cowan’s career.

As for her plans for her future at the AHA and the next chapter, Cowan will continue to look ahead at ways to improve new and existing programs and to create more opportunities for tomorrow’s leaders through leadership and education.

“We’re not done growing yet,” Cowan declares. “The sky is the limit as to what we can accomplish with the awesome momentum and support that surrounds this junior organization and youth foundation.

“The AHA took a chance on a farm girl from Iowa with a passion to serve,” she reflects. “Through the years there have been lots of milestones for the breed and I have enjoyed being a part of each and every one. Thanks for making this 20-year milestone so special for me and thanks for being such an important part of my Hereford journey.” **HW**