



Seventy-six members of the NJHA traveled to the Golden State Aug. 1-4, for the ninth-annual Faces of Leadership Conference, sponsored by HYFA.

# San Francisco: A Gateway to Opportunity

**National Junior Hereford Association members head west to experience California agriculture.**

by *Kendra Davis*

The air felt a bit cooler for the 76 members of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) who travelled to the Golden State for the ninth annual Faces of Leadership Conference. Held in the “City by the Bay,” participants ages 14 to 21 arrived in San Francisco for a four-day event to gain leadership and communication skills. Sponsored by the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) and the Coley-Malir Leadership Endowment, Faces of Leadership allows youth to learn from fellow agriculturalists about what sparks their passion for their respective career.

The Faces of Leadership Conference serves as an opportunity to network with other individuals interested in the Hereford cattle industry as well as leadership and industry professionals. From industry

tours to leadership workshops to motivational speakers, there was something there for everyone. However, one of the best things indulged in at the conference was networking with fellow Hereford enthusiasts from across the country.

### **Drumming up a great start**

The event kicked off Tuesday afternoon with an opportunity for NJHA members to get to know one another through icebreaker activities led by the NJHA board of directors.

During the opening session of the conference, participants were star-struck as they listened to professional drummer and motivational speaker, Kenny Aronoff, play some of the most famous songs. His rock career began when he started touring and





NJHA Leadership Chair, Brandt Downing, speaks to Faces of Leadership participants to kick off the three-day event in California.



Voted a "Top 100 Greatest Drummers of All Time" by *Rolling Stone Magazine*, influential keynote speaker and best-selling author Kenny Aronoff speaks to the group about determination and tenacity.



recording with John Mellancamp. Since then he has performed with stars from Johnny Cash to The Rolling Stones to Elton John.

Aronoff stressed the importance of adversity and tenacity, teaching the NJHA members to not give up on their dreams no matter how many times they heard "no." Through his stories of being in many bands and working with them for the common goal to make great music, he taught about teamwork as well.

### Adventures with the founders

Participants joined the Coleman family in Modesto, Calif., for the second day of the event. The Colemans own and operate Sierra Ranches and are the founding members of HYFA's Foundation 1 Club.

After seeing Sierra's barns and pastures and learning about irrigation in California, the Coleman family gave the group a look at the California nut industry by touring their almond and walnut orchard. Participants also got to walk

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Sierra Ranches, Modesto, Calif., seeks out the most elite Hereford genetics in the country to bring them to the foothills of California.



Sierra Ranches demonstrates hospitality as they host 76 Faces of Leadership participants at their bull site for burgers and refreshments.



Participants examine young walnut trees at Sierra Ranches. The operation includes nut trees and wine grapes in addition to the cattle.



Members enjoy themselves in the shade of the vineyard at Sierra Ranches.



After supper hosted by Sierra Ranches, the group enjoyed volleyball, badmitten and watching the sunset over the coastal mountain range.

through the family’s vineyard, which supplies grapes for Gallo Family Vineyards.

The conference could not go without a trip to a dairy farm, as California has been the nation’s leading dairy state since 1993 and accounts for 18.5 percent of the United States’ milk production. The group had the opportunity to see a state-of-the-art robotic dairy farm. Postma Dairy in Modesto is home to 12 robots that automatically milk the cows. By using robots, farms are able to increase average milk production, monitor cows more easily, and of course it gives the farmer a little bit more freedom.

Attendees also learned the story of Ratto Bros. Fresh Produce, which began in 1905 on a horse drawn cart. Since then, the business has expanded to be one of the most reputable growers in California. Participants of Faces of Leadership

were able to see part of the operation as well as hear leadership strategies from one of the owners.

After traveling back to the hotel, participants listened to a panel of individuals who have been involved in agriculture their whole lives. Rick and Bonnie Coley-Malir and Matt Leo were generous enough to dedicate time to tell their story to the youth at the conference. The Malirs, founders and owners of City Barbeque, focus on building amazing teams and providing tremendous service while making the best barbeque around. Leo is currently the managing partner of Leo-Parreira & Associates, a commodities brokerage house.

The evening ended with a fun-filled night with the Sierra Ranches crew. The group ate a delicious meal of *Certified Hereford Beef*®, corn on the cob, cheesy potatoes and homemade apple crisp. After



Participants visit Potsma Dairy, the first dairy to implement robotic milkers into its operation in the state of California.



NJHA membership chair, Nathan Hopkins takes a bunch of fresh basil at Ratto Bros. Fresh Produce.



The Ratto family, owners of Ratto Bros. Fresh Produce talks to the group about their business and how they became one of the most reputable vegetable growers in California.



Established in 1905, Ratto Bros. Fresh Produce is a trusted and valued business that can be relied upon to provide the best, freshest produce available.



Pictured (l to r) Bonnie Coley-Malir, Matt Leo and Rick Malir share their experiences of becoming great leaders in the agriculture industry during the panel discussion.

supper they enjoyed playing volleyball and badminton and watching the sunset over the coastal mountain range.

### Learning from the masters

The next morning the group departed on tour buses for Pedretti Line 1 Dominos. Gino Pedretti, an American Hereford Association (AHA) Hall of Fame member and past board of director, got his start early in the beef business. He began milking cows at his father's dairy when he was nine years old and began his registered Hereford herd a few years later. Pedretti Herefords started using Domino Prince breeding and switched to line one breeding in 1974. Their main objective is to supply high-performing, tested, range-ready bulls for the commercial cattleman.

Faces of Leadership participants enjoyed learning about the ranch from Pedretti and his son-in-law, Mark St. Pierre, who is currently serving on the AHA board of directors. The trip to Pedretti's was noted as one of the highlights of the trip, as many of the participants had never seen line one breeding before.

Pedretti Ranches also includes a dairy farm. Junior members were able to see a conventional milking parlor and learn about the history of both sides of the Pedretti's operation.

After that, it was off to Minturn Huller Cooperative to see more of the California almond industry. The almond industry generates more than \$21 billion in economic revenue and is the No. 1 specialty crop export for the U.S.

The last agriculture industry tour of the trip was to Hilmar Cheese Company, which specializes in the production of natural cheeses. Here,



Mark St. Pierre and the rest of the Pedretti Ranches crew told the story of the Pedretti Line One Dominos herd in El Nido, Calif.



AHA Hall of Fame member, Gino Pedretti, chats with current NJHA Vice Chair, Brooke Hinojosa-Sidwell during the Pedretti Ranches tour.



Participants learn about Pedretti's conventional dairy farm during the tour of the ranch.



Precision and teamwork was required as participants were put into teams at Hilmar Cheese Co. to see which team could make the most cheese.

participants teamed up and put their cheese-making ability to the test. The team with the heaviest cheese won a block of Hilmar cheese.

After enjoying an evening aboard the San Francisco Hornblower for a dinner cruise around the San Francisco Bay to see the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz, NJHA members headed back to their homes.

Although participants have left the Golden State to resume normal life, they take with them new friendships, memories and skills that will last a lifetime. **HW**



Seventy-six NJHA members stood on the scale at Minturn Hullers Cooperative to add their collective weight to the list of tour groups in the office. The group weighed in at 12,040 lb.