

Rancher, Artist, Mom, Foundation 1 Club Member:

Michelle Weber

Foundation 1 Club Member Michelle Weber's artistic journey.

by **Kendra Davis**

With a blank canvas and a paint brush in hand, Michelle Weber of Michelle Weber Studio has painted her way into the Hereford breed with National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) and the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) partnerships. Using her talents for the good of youth in agriculture has been a theme in her career since day one.

Artist at heart

Weber and her husband, Jesse, along with his parents, own and operate Weber Land and Cattle, a purebred seedstock Red Angus operation. The Lake Benton, Minn., natives also have three children, Wacey (6), Reese (3) and Andi (2) — with another child due in October. While she is a dedicated mother, her full-time career, however, is painting.

Pablo Picasso once said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up." Weber is one who has not experienced that problem in the slightest. She first took an art class in high school and, surprisingly, did not like it very much during the first week. Her art teacher at

the time saw potential in Weber's ability to create, and with a little encouragement from him, she was soon painting in every spare minute she had.

Once her passion for art had been established, she attended South Dakota State University, where she pursued an art education degree. After looking at the economy and the job market, she eventually graduated with an advertising degree, where she could still be creative. Even with the change in major, she did not lose her desire to paint. She took some painting classes during her senior year after realizing how much she missed the art. As she began to develop her own unique style, she soon found her most desired subject was all around her.

"My life has revolved around agriculture and the outdoors since I was a little girl, but not until I met my husband were my eyes opened to the beauty of ranch life," Weber says. "Newborn calves taking their first steps, that first day out to pasture and the sun setting behind an old windmill. These are what fuel my passion for painting."

After she started painting, she began getting requests for custom commissioned pieces featuring various aspects of farm and ranch life. Her business began as solely custom oil paintings based on images customers sent her. Before long the paintings started to get recognized on the local and even national levels.

At that time Weber was working as a graphic designer and painted only during her spare time. With more and more custom orders rolling in, she soon took a leap of faith. With advice and encouragement from her husband, Weber decided to work as a full-time artist, and she started Weber Custom Painting — now Michelle Weber Studio — in 2011.

Since the beginning, Weber has painted countless pieces of art ending up all over the nation. Additionally, she illustrated two children's books and expanded her business into print sales and custom framing.



Family is one of the most important things to Weber. Pictured (l to r) Reese (3), Jesse, Wacey (6), Michelle and Andi (2).

Giving back

Over the years, Weber has been very generous with her talents, donating her time and creations to many youth livestock organizations.

"All through my career, I've wanted to support the youth because in any breed, whether it's Herefords or Red Angus, you need to have the youth coming up and following in the footsteps of the people leading now," Weber says. "I've always admired people for supporting, and I've always tried to support wherever I can in the junior programs."

For Weber, giving back has included donating to both live and silent auctions, teaching painting classes for groups, and partnering with events and organizations. Some of the latest organizations she has teamed up with are the NJHA and HYFA.

During the planning phase of the 2018 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), Hereford staff decided to start doing something different and unique for each JNHE. After some discussion, Weber was commissioned to create a commemorative painting each year for the event that would be auctioned off at the awards ceremony. All proceeds from the sale of the yearly painting would benefit the NJHA.

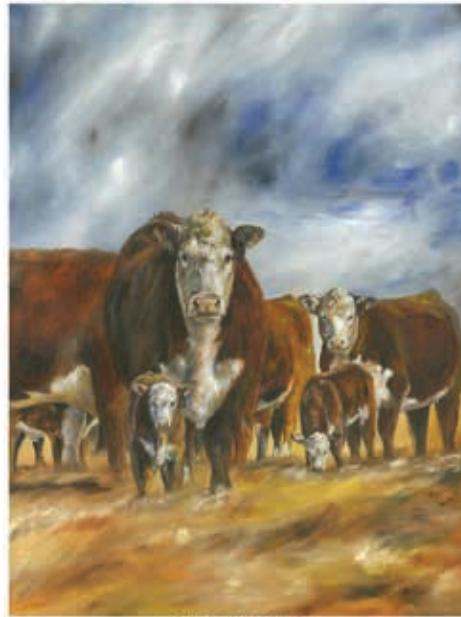
"I think it turned out absolutely beautiful," Weber says. "The image itself was amazing just to look at. All the cool colors and all the warm colors and, of course, all of the beautiful Herefords in the middle made the painting really come to life. It turned out to be quite the piece to be admired."

"Not Just a Day Dream," the 30- by 40-inch painting, was auctioned as planned at the awards ceremony. The painting was sold and donated back to the NJHA twice before the sale was final after the third bidding round. A total of \$20,500 was raised for the NJHA through the sale of the painting from the following buyers: Moss Neck Herefords, JB Show Cattle and Nolan Herefords.

Framed prints of "Not Just a Day Dream" were also used as both prizes and judges' gifts throughout the week of the JNHE. In addition to the painting, Weber was also in attendance at the JNHE promoting her new book — "Harvey: A Ranch Birthday."

"Harvey"

The idea behind the children's book began many years ago for both HYFA and Weber. "Harvey" is



Commissioned by the NJHA, the original 30- by 40-inch "Not Just a Day Dream" painting sold for \$20,500 at the JNHE award's ceremony.

the first book Weber has authored and the second she has illustrated — the first being "*Levi's Lost Calf*".

"The inspiration behind 'Harvey' came about a year ago while I was speaking to a family member who is not ranch-based or farm-based at all," Weber explains. "They have young kids, and they just expressed how intriguing they think our life story is each and every day on the ranch."

Weber notes farmers and ranchers do not realize that everyday events on a farm or ranch, such as a cow having a calf, can be fascinating for a person who does not have the opportunity to experience them. The book

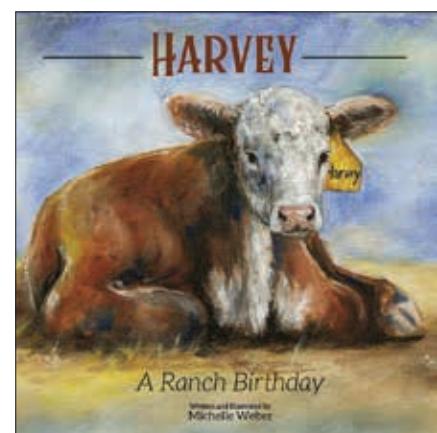
walks readers through a "birthday" on the ranch. It expresses both the relationship between a cow and her calf and the relationship between a rancher and his livestock. The excitement of a birthday is felt across the ranch as this sweet and silly Hereford calf walks through his very first day of life.

The book can be found on Weber's website, Amazon.com and ShopHereford.com. All proceeds from books bought from Shop Hereford will go directly to HYFA. Weber has also recently joined HYFA's Foundation 1 Club, so a percentage of the earnings from the books sold on her website will benefit HYFA, as well.

The Foundation 1 Club is a group of breeders and businesses who donate a percentage of their sale gross to HYFA to benefit leadership, scholarship and educational experiences for Hereford youth.

"I'm very excited to be a new member of the Foundation 1 Club," Weber says. "It's mission to support its youth is directly in line with how I try to support youth in the livestock industry."

Editor's note: To become a member of the Foundation 1 Club, contact Amy Cowan at 816-218-2256 or acowan@hereford.org.



Harvey the Hereford calf takes readers on a journey through his very first day on earth in this childrens' book. Harvey: A Ranch Birthday was sponsored by HYFA, and a portion of proceeds from the book directly impact Hereford youth.