



A Patriotic Project

National Hereford Queen collects donations for troops overseas in "Hereford Helping Heroes" service project.

by *Brooke Roberts*

The morning of July 4th dawned bright and clear in Grand Island, Neb. The beautiful setting only added to Abbygail Pitstick's excitement as she contemplated her ongoing service project. As the 2018 National Hereford Queen, Abbygail channeled the patriotic timing of this year's VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in an effort to help meet the daily needs of troops overseas.

"The service men and women are role models to me," Abbygail explains.

"I think it hits home for a lot of Hereford families, not just myself."

The South Solon, Ohio, native led a service project entitled "Hereford Helping Heroes" while Hereford families from across the nation celebrated the Fourth of July together in Nebraska. The inspiration for Abbygail's project stemmed from her uncle, who has served for many years and was recently deployed this year. Abbygail recalls that while her uncle was deployed, he would contact her family

for necessary supplies, such as coffee or laundry detergent, which were not always stocked at his camp's supply store.

At her uncle's suggestion, Abbygail partnered with the Red Cross to help facilitate the collection and delivery of donations for troops overseas. Items ranging from deodorant, toothpaste, sunscreen, granola bars, canned soup, board games, puzzles and DVDs were collected in the show office and the National Hereford Women's (NHW) booth during the seven days of JNHE.

A personal touch

Although the essentials were very appreciated, Abbygail knew her uncle and other soldiers were touched most when they received handmade cards.

"The cards would be set out on a table in their lounge area where they could sit and read them," she says. "This was by far a highlight for all of them through all the hard times they faced."

She decided in addition to everyday supplies, handwritten cards from the Hereford family would be included in the overseas delivery.

To get young members even more involved with the project, card-making supplies were available at the NHW booth at JNHE. Although Abbygail admits she was a bit skeptical about younger kids making cards, she was impressed with the degree of involvement and the quality of cards from the young participants.

"The kids have actually had a huge involvement and loved it," she says. "I think they really do understand why we are doing this and what we are doing this for."

"No one realizes how much a card means to someone so far away from home," she continues. "Not only are we giving back, but we are showing our appreciation for what [our troops] do that always seems to go unnoticed."

While a handmade card or a small donation may seem like a tiny gesture, Abbygail believes the project means a great deal and hopes to make daily life easier for servicemen and women. The 18-year-old plans to stay in contact with the Red Cross after dropping off this year's donations and to potentially include state Hereford associations in future efforts.

Just three days after this year's 900-plus JNHE exhibitors celebrated their nation's freedom together, Abbygail was proud to return to Ohio with more than six large boxes of food and toiletry items and upwards of 200 cards to drop off at the Red Cross location in Columbus, Ohio. Abbygail hopes the handmade cards and the donations will portray a feeling of thankfulness from Hereford youth.

"I want them to know that we all appreciate what they do and understand why they serve," she says. "Because of them, we are able to be here at this show, at this facility, at this time." **HW**



Abbygail Pitstick spearheaded the effort to provide necessities and personal notes to soldiers overseas.