

by **Austin Matheny**

From Milwaukee to Grand Island, Neb., I have traveled the country for Junior National Hereford Expos (JNHE), Faces of Leadership, state and regional shows and other Hereford events. As I exited the showring for the last time as a junior member, I started to reflect on the journey I had as a member of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA). In 2005, when I attended my first JNHE, I did not know the people I met and the experiences I had would influence my life in the years to come. Some of you walked in the ring for the first time this year, some of you still have a few years left and some of you had your name called as a retiring junior. Regardless of whether this was your first or your

last JNHE, I want to pass on advice I have been given over the years.

Set goals

I am not the type of person to write goals down, but I have them on a list in my head at all times. I am always adding to this list, making changes and crossing things off. As you go about your time as a junior, make a list, add to it, change it and always make sure you are improving it. I can remember setting goals for myself at a young age which I have now been able to accomplish.

I was not the best speaker in FFA and certainly have not always been the best showman — but I always knew two goals of mine were to be in the top 10 in senior showmanship and to serve on the NJHA board of directors. Accomplishing these goals took a lot of hard work and dedication. I am not naturally a public speaker, but working toward getting better helped me get to where I am now. I strongly encourage you to start now; find goals and work on achieving them before the clock on your junior career runs out. I can promise setting and trying to achieve goals will add memories, lifelong friends and unforgettable experiences to your life.

Make friends

When you reach your last JNHE, my hope is you have friends from every state. Take time at cattle shows to leave the stalls, attend the membership meeting, compete in contests and go to opening ceremonies. These events may not seem important at the time, but when you go to college or take your first job, these people will be your roommates or coworkers.

Finding friends who understand the livestock industry makes showing cattle much more rewarding. Each summer I look

forward to catching up with my old friends and meeting new ones. My challenge for you next summer in Denver is to make a new friend each day. Find friends inside your state and from all over the country. One day you will be thankful for the friendships you made at a young age.

Find your passion

If you were able to attend Faces of Leadership this year in California, I hope you remember our speaker Kenny Aronoff and his passion for music. If you were not there, I want to give you the advice Aronoff gave the juniors in attendance. His advice was simple — find your passion in life. So many times, we forget living life with passion is living life with a purpose. For some of us, this means staying in agriculture, while for others it is helping in other industries. Whatever you do, if it is your passion, I can ensure you will be well equipped because of your time as a member of the NJHA. As you choose colleges, degrees and jobs, keep that in mind. I encourage you to live your life with passion.

Many things have changed for our breed since my first JNHE in Milwaukee. The size of our event has changed, the junior membership is increasing and the cattle are better than ever. I have been able to change as well. I took this advice and made my time as a junior one of which I am proud.

It is never too late to take the advice I was once given and to implement it in your life. I have one last JNHE to attend as chairman of the NJHA junior board. I am excited about the opportunity to see all of you next summer, but meanwhile, I encourage you to put these three things into action now: set goals, make friends and, most of all, find your passion. **HW**



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