

Lessons from Home

Joining the Hereford breed fueled a passion for supporting the education of Hereford youth for years to come.

by *Taylor Belle Matheny*

The rich history, familiar traditions and knowledge of cow families are a staple in the household of many generational Hereford breeders. As a newcomer to the Hereford breed, these things are not all that familiar. Luckily, the breed is known for individuals who are willing to take others under their wing and make them part of the Hereford family.

In 1992 Nancy Keilty and her husband, Tim, of Cedar, Mich., set out to purchase their first Herefords. Along with Nancy's father, Ed Ball, a commercial cattleman, the three attended the Ace



dispersal sale with their eyes on a few of the lots. Looking at a pen of bulls, Ed remarked to Nancy, "Do you think I can get that one for \$600?" Being used to normal market prices, they left without that bull, but Nancy did purchase eight cows to begin their Hereford herd.

Getting involved

As new faces in the breed, Nancy and Tim were connected with other Hereford breeders in Michigan by a fellow Hereford breeder who graciously extended his knowledge. In the years following, Tim served on the Michigan Hereford Association board of directors and played an integral role in planning the 1999 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). From that point forward, the Keiltys were vested in the betterment of the breed and supporting Hereford youth across the United States.

While attending their first JNHE and helping to host the 1999 Junior National "Spartan Time" at Michigan State University, the Keiltys saw the influence Hereford youth had on their own children and other members of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA).



Cottonwood Springs, Cedar, Mich., has grown not only in cattle, but also in generosity since its start in the late 1990s.

“It was the youth and the junior board helping my daughter that left me so impressed,” Nancy says. “It made me think, ‘I want to do something to be a part of this.’”

Having little prior knowledge about the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA), Nancy spoke to an American Hereford Association (AHA) Board director as they stood ringside and mentioned she wanted to be a part of HYFA, but that was the end of the conversation. Two years later, Nancy received a call about serving on the HYFA board of directors.

This calling to leadership brought to mind a saying she had learned from her father: “Leave the campsite better than you found it.” With this mentality, Nancy and Tim embarked on a mission to do just that.

Improving education

One of the first ways the couple contributed to HYFA was the establishment of the Ball Foundation/Cottonwood Springs Farm Scholarship. Nancy’s late parents started the Ed and Virginia Ball Foundation, which gifted \$50,000 to HYFA. Following this donation, Nancy and Tim matched the gift in honor of the Balls to create a total contribution of \$100,000. A \$5,000 scholarship is now presented to a Hereford youth each fall.

Over the years, Nancy has seen firsthand the caliber of Hereford youth through her involvement with HYFA.

“Reading scholarship applications and talking with youth at events, I have seen the presence, the finesse and the confidence that Hereford youth present,” Nancy says. “Through the educational and scholarship programs of HYFA, we are giving to youth whom, in turn, are going to be the future of the agricultural industry.”

Nancy knew early on she wanted to make another contribution to HYFA but was not yet sure what it would be. During her time as a board member, she watched the foundation give numerous scholarships and decided to start an endowment to amplify the educational component of HYFA’s mission.

“Leave the campsite better than you found it.”

At the Annual Meeting this October in Kansas City, Mo., Nancy and Tim announced the Keilty and Cottonwood Springs Educational Endowment. The goal of this \$250,000 endowment is to move educational events at the JNHE forward for years to come.

“The Keilty and Cottonwood Springs Educational Endowment is going to create so many

more opportunities for Hereford youth who participate in the Junior National Hereford Expo each year,” explains Amy Cowan, AHA director of youth activities and foundation. “This generous gift gives us the ability to propel educational programs to the next level and opens up more doors for us to help educate and develop our future leaders and prepare them for life after the National Junior Hereford Association.”

The endowment is focused on offering juniors valuable experiences to draw upon when in the workforce, regardless of the career path they decide to take.

“Through HYFA, if juniors participate and get involved in all that is offered they are getting huge experience with being a leader,” Nancy says. “Who knows who will be the future president of the AHA, but these juniors are going to be doing something within the agricultural industry that makes a difference in the world.”

Endowment in action

Knowing she wanted to offer new possibilities to a wide group of youth, Nancy called upon

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Throughout her tenure, Nancy Keilty and fellow HYFA board members have helped to build a firm foundation for generations to come. Pictured here at HYFA’s spring board meeting from (l to r) are: Ray Ramsey, HYFA chairman, Bailey Clanton, Amy Cowan, George Sprague, Nancy Keilty, Bruce Everhart and Bob Norton.

someone just as committed to the junior program to help her find an area that could reap the benefits of the endowment.

“Amy came up with the idea to enhance programs at the JNHE and that started a vision for what the endowment could do,” Nancy says.

Leaders within the NJHA will carry this endowment into the next phase. The vision has been set in place for all the endowment can do for the future of HYFA and members of the NJHA.

“Our current board is excited about the opportunities to grow programs at the JNHE,” says Rylee Barber, NJHA fundraising chair. “We are working to expand our current contests and to create new ones to give members unique experiences that develop them into leaders.”

At the 2019 JNHE in Denver, there are plans in action to fund projects in conjunction with the event.

“With additional funds, we will be able to elevate the programs that are already in place and add to them as well,” Amy explains. “For starters, we hope to rejuvenate the *Certified Hereford Beef*® Grill-Off contest and add an educational component from the NJHA Fed Steer Shootout to the Junior National event each summer.”

In order to benefit the entire junior association, this endowment will fund programs which encourage participation from everyone in the barn.

“Plans are already in place to enhance the Hereford Pen-to-Pen program that started last year,” Amy says. “The NJHA board is super excited to debut the ‘Bridging the Gap’ program that will feature a college and career fair for Junior National youth who are in the midst of making college and career choices.”

Make a difference

There comes a time in everyone’s life to envision a future beyond their own lifetime and to begin forging a legacy.

“Come grow with us. There is nothing more rewarding than supporting youth in agriculture and there are so many ways to get involved,” Amy says. “Be it through an educational endowment like this, supporting leadership programs or becoming a member of the Foundation 1 Club, there is a way for everyone to get involved at all different levels.”

As explained from the lesson Nancy’s parents shared long ago, every improvement — big or small — makes a difference.

“Nancy’s parents instilled in her to always leave the campsite better than she found it, and she and Tim have gone above and beyond to ensure there are even more opportunities in agriculture for generations to come,” says Amy.

There are multiple ways to make a difference within the lives of Hereford youth whether it be through scholarships, leadership or education.

“I would encourage anybody interested in helping HYFA to consider reaching out to a board member,” Nancy says. “People really need to think about the future of their estate through their ranches, farms and families to make a succession plan for the generations to come, and to see if HYFA fits into the plan.”

Tim and Nancy are fulfilling a lesson from home by leaving the Hereford campsite in better hands financially than how they found it.

“Through the educational endowment we are giving to youth who are the future,” Nancy explains. “We are going to be gone and I want to know the world is going to be a better place for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.” **HW**

About the farm

Cottonwood Springs Farm (CSF) is owned by Tim and Nancy Keilty. Located in northern Michigan, this 250-acre operation is home to a registered herd that is heavily influenced by Sooner genetics. Each year CSF utilizes in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer technology to offer the best offspring from proven donors. Over the past few years, CSF has raised numerous national champions.

CSF also has a venture selling homegrown beef to locals. Leelanau Natural Beef is a grass-fed, antibiotic-free beef that is labeled “All Natural.” The 85:15 ground beef is sold at local restaurants and at a self-serve station on the farm. The diverse operation at CSF was established in 1982. Today, it continues to be a leading Hereford operation and an innovative member of the beef industry. **HW**

