

## Overcoming Fear

by *Austin Matheny*



Days come and go, but the best part about life is memories that will last a lifetime. All of us are on a different path creating our own, unique story.

Luckily, I have memories from my childhood that encouraged me to pursue my goals and to follow a path that would challenge me. Without the knowledge and wisdom gained from all of life's experiences, I would have not grown to be the individual I am today. I can truly say my time serving on the National Junior

Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors has made one of the largest impacts on my life.

### Reflection

I can remember heading to my first Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) with my family in Milwaukee, Wis. It does not seem like long ago that I was the little chubby-cheeked boy showing for the first time. Throughout the week, I had my eyes on the juniors in the maroon jackets. In the showing and out of the showing, they were an inspiration to me. The older I got and the more JNHEs I attended, the more I realized the influence the junior board has on our association. I set a goal to follow in my parents' footsteps and the many other juniors I looked up to, to be an NJHA director one day. But accomplishing this goal wasn't going to be easy.

You see, I am not a natural speaker, and my first time giving a public speech was more terrifying than rewarding. It was my sophomore year of high school, and I was an officer for our FFA chapter. At the banquet, we were each required to read a portion of the script. My time to speak was nearing, and I was nervous to speak in front of a big crowd. When the microphone was handed to me, my nerves made it nearly impossible to deliver my portion of the script. When we left that night, I convinced myself I couldn't be a leader because I wasn't the best at public speaking. I didn't realize then I was going to be a leader in a different way and, in turn, would be prepared to lead our association.

Throughout high school, I was heavily involved with our football team. I was the team captain

and helped lead my team to state quarter finals my senior year. This position was more my style of leadership — no public speaking required, just making sure the job at hand was accomplished. Needless to say, I was in my comfort zone as team captain. This experience taught me how to work with a team and how to be a confident leader.

### In preparation

When it came time to run for the junior board three years ago, I was hesitant at first. I had the desire to serve the association, but the thought of giving a speech still terrified me. Through my time in football, I was prepared to lead others. My family was persistent and kept encouraging me to run. I knew to be a director I needed to face my fear and to work hard on my public speaking skills. I turned in my application and began conquering my fear of public speaking.

In the weeks leading up to the JNHE, my sister and I would spend our evenings working with our heifers and practicing my speech delivery and preparing to answer questions. Football taught me practice was the only way I was going to get better. No matter how uncomfortable I was, I knew, in the end, this extra effort was going to pay off. It seemed as if those few weeks leading up to JNHE flew by and Taylor Belle and I began practicing more often to make sure I was ready to achieve the goal I had set for myself early on.

Before I knew it, my family and I were loaded up for another road trip to the JNHE in Madison, Wis. I was nervous to campaign and to give a speech to the junior membership. The week flew by, and it was now

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time for me to deliver the speech I had worked so hard to perfect. I made my way to the podium, found my sister in the crowd and began my speech. A few minutes in I realized I wasn't the nervous young boy in a blue corduroy jacket. In fact, I was doing pretty well. I was proud of myself that evening, no matter how

the election turned out. As I'm sure you guessed, I made it onto the junior board that week and began my term serving the association of which I am proud to be a member.

To those juniors who are uncertain and nervous about serving on the junior board, even though it is in

your heart to make a difference, I encourage you to take the leap to apply. I believe everything good in life comes through hard work and dedication. My best advice to you, as a junior, is to face the challenges on your path because you never know where they may lead you. **HW**

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## Inspirational Juniors

by *Brooke Hinojosa-Sidwell*



Looking back at the summer of 2016, I was completely unsure of where the road might take me besides Stillwater, Okla. I was fresh out of high school with big dreams, but I did not know where to

start. I knew I was going to run for the NJHA board of directors, but I was still uncertain about how I would leave my mark if elected.

While I was sitting in the stands waiting to see if I was one of the select few to receive an iconic maroon jacket, I was so nervous. I remember thinking to myself, "What if I am fortunate enough to get the next jacket? What am I going to do?" Before I even knew it, I was one of the newest on the NJHA board of directors. This blessing felt so surreal, yet I was still questioning how to leave my mark.

### **Purpose fulfilled**

Soon after the election, my purpose revealed itself. The day after the awards banquet, a young lady's mother came up to me and congratulated me. Not only did she congratulate me, but she also told a short story of how I had inspired her daughter to do her hair just like mine. Looking back, this is small scale, but it made me realize my purpose was to inspire young juniors.

Spring rolled around quicker than I thought, and it was time to start thinking about what shows to attend. My first year, I signed up for the Texas Junior Hereford State Show. This state show is one of my favorite memories. I remember showing up at the fairgrounds knowing only a few juniors

and a few parents. Before I knew it, I had multiple buddies who wanted me to join a water fight with them.

The water fight continued for almost an hour, and this is where I made some new friends. These new friends continued to be some of the young juniors who always greet me when we see one another. Joining in the water fight was one of the best ways I influenced many young juniors. To this day parents of those young Texas juniors still visit with me about how much they enjoyed seeing so many young kids having so much fun because a "big kid" was playing their game. Again, something simple and small can mean so much.

After attending the Texas show, I had high expectations of juniors at the next show. Fortunately enough, the next show I attended was the Red Dirt Rendezvous in Stillwater. The Red Dirt show was nothing short of amazing. The young juniors and parents I met while attending this show are second-to-none. I spent a whole day getting to hear some juniors' stories and spent time with them and their cattle. Their stories encouraged me to be the best role model I could possibly be for them. I am thankful to have found my second home with such supportive peers. Little did I know that I had met my second family at the Red Dirt Rendezvous. Not only did this family become my second family, they became my employer!

### **A special bond**

Last but certainly not least, there is this young girl from Texas I have greatly influenced. We met each other in Kansas City during my third year on

the board, but it feels as if we have known each other our whole lives. Not only have I influenced this young girl, but she has also left her mark on me. Getting to know her and her family this past year has been a true blessing. She continues to work hard and does not let anything tear her down. Little does she know she has inspired me to be the best version I can be to inspire other young juniors to get involved and to chase their dreams.

I am sure you all are wondering why I have talked about how I have influenced all of these juniors and not how they have influenced me. The answer to that question and the life lesson is this: When you are focused on making a difference in the life of someone else, you don't realize the impact that individual has left on you until after the fact. All of the juniors I have met over my three-year term have made a huge impact on my life and have encouraged me to be the best I can be. I encourage each and every junior to be a unique version of yourself. Go out of your way to make new friends, learn their stories and keep in touch. These are some of the best lessons I have taken away from everyone I have met through the junior board. You never know the mark you can leave on someone, and you certainly do not realize the mark they have left on you until you step away and reflect. Thank you, NJHA members, for leaving your mark on me. **HW**