



The NJHA would like to thank John and Dede Sullivan for their continued support of Hereford youth. Sullivan Supply Inc. hosted juniors in Dunlap, Iowa, for an afternoon touring its headquarters, manufacturing facilities and Sullivan Farms.

New Face, Same Conference

A decade underway, the Faces of Leadership Conference focused on creating leaders, collaborating, and cultivating opportunities.

by *Rudy Pooch*

When I came on board as the American Hereford Association (AHA) youth activities intern in May, one of my primary responsibilities was assisting with coordinating the Faces of Leadership Conference in my home state of Nebraska. Having once served as the site of the

Nebraska State Fair, the Nebraska Innovation Campus was a fitting venue for National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members to gather for a week of networking and leadership. As a senior in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) animal science program, I was excited for Hereford juniors to experience our beautiful campus and the city of Lincoln.

A vision comes to life

Coming off of last year's conference in sunny San Francisco, hosting Faces of Leadership in Nebraska presented a unique challenge of engaging juniors and coming up with a compelling itinerary. Conference beneficiaries Rick and Bonnie Malir collaborated with Amy Cowan, AHA director of youth activities and Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA), to take the annual event in a new

direction and to set the stage for the next decade of the leadership conference. With a mission to influence and develop leadership traits of NJHA members, the 2019 Faces of Leadership hosted July 30-Aug. 3 in Lincoln, Neb., focused on creating leaders, collaborating, and cultivating opportunities to grow the young minds of the Hereford cattle industry.

Set to lead the charge of the entrepreneurial theme was Tom Field, Ph.D., director of the UNL Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneur Program. Field and the Engler team approached the conference with the foundational belief a young person is capable of problem solving and creating solutions when given the opportunity and bandwidth to do so. Just as he challenges his collegiate students, Field structured the week to challenge





UNL Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program Director, Tom Field, Ph.D., challenged Hereford entrepreneurs by taking them through the steps of starting a company during two-day workshop at the Nebraska Innovation Campus.



Groups creatively presented their industry problem, customer data and solution during their pitch to a panel of judges.

and coach Hereford juniors through several business projects.

With the generous support of the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA), the Coley-Malir Leadership Endowment and Sullivan Supply, Inc., Hereford juniors were in store for a whirlwind of leadership and team-building exercises. Through forward thinking, conference sponsors made the conscientious effort to invest in young people in a way which potentially may have changed the trajectory of their careers, their thoughts and their relationships.



Hereford juniors jump for joy as they learn how to put their entrepreneurial skills to work.

Creating leaders

With a new vision for the framework of the conference, the week was organized a bit differently than usual. As a pre-conference warm-up, NJHA members completed the Clifton Strengths Assessment to identify their top five personal strengths. Under the mentorship of Nebraska Human Resources Institute Director and Clifton Professor in Mentoring Research Lindsay Hastings, Ph.D., during Tuesday's opening ceremonies, youth learned to use their unique talents and skill-set to achieve goals, become better leaders and empower others.

Chuck Schroeder, retired industry leader and keynote speaker, also presented a strong message about the importance of knowing yourself and implementing faith into your relationships and choices. Staying true to his theme,

“don't let anyone define who you are,” Schroeder emphasized individuality and standing up for your beliefs.

During Wednesday's breakfast overlooking the Cornhusker's football field at the UNL Memorial Stadium, UNL Associate Athletic Director Matt Davison touched on preparing for success. Davison highlighted how leadership generates social influence, and how people become a reflection of who they spend the most time with. His motivational presentation concluded with advice to leave a positive first impression wherever you go, because you only have one chance to set yourself apart in the game of life.

Collaborating

Throughout the week, NJHA entrepreneurs in action could be found all over the Nebraska Innovation campus. One could



Ralston Ripp visits with opening session keynote speaker Mr. Chuck Schroeder who inspired juniors to know themselves and choose their own pathways.

walk around the Campus and witness juniors in classrooms, hallways, assembly rooms, stairways, outside — you name it!

For the feature activity of the conference, juniors worked through the challenging task of creating a business. Utilizing strong teamwork, problem solving,

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UNL Associate Athletic Director, Matt Davison, speaks to Hereford juniors about setting yourself up for success and social influence during breakfast Wednesday morning at Memorial Stadium.

creativity, competitiveness and many more strengths, teams came up with concepts like Teflon™ nozzles for adhesive cans, improving the unloading process at junior nationals, incorporating more informational resources for NJHA juniors and creating a dissolvable tab to insert in water filters to supplement water with vitamins and minerals.

One group focused on the development of a boxed beef program. Team members Rylee Barber, Brandt Downing, Melanie Fishel, Jordan Gatz, Taylor Belle Matheny and Hannah Williams created Beef A La Carte, an online meat retailer. With a business model of providing customizable

and convenient ways to meet consumer beef demands, Beef A La Carte offered an online sales experience for customers to select the quantity, quality and cuts of beef to be shipped directly to their home. While conducting customer and product research, they launched a consumer survey on social media and made many phone calls. In less than 24 hours the team communicated with more than 265 people. The group's pitch was very impressive as they had created a logo and developed a website to walk us through the Beef A La Carte experience.

"It was neat to watch the NJHA entrepreneurs in action as they worked together on their projects,"



UNL meat science professor Steve Jones, Ph.D., informs juniors about beef fabrication during one of the rotations at the UNL Animal Science Complex Friday morning. Other rotations included meat processing, a Certified Hereford Beef® taste test and facility tours.

Cowan shares. "You could see them grow throughout the week as they identified an industry problem, conducted real customer research and formulated a solution."

Cultivating opportunities

The final big piece of the conference was providing outlets for networking and exposure to future opportunities. Juniors spent time with UNL meat science professor Gary Sullivan, Ph.D., and other faculty at the UNL Animal Science Complex. Members participated in meat science rotations exploring beef fabrication, processing and a Certified Hereford Beef® taste test. Hereford juniors were excited about the facilities, programs and current research being conducted at the college.

Sullivan Supply Inc., the official industry partner and show supplier of the NJHA, hosted Hereford juniors at its headquarters in Dunlap, Iowa, to tour the past and present Sullivan Supply warehouse, manufacturing facility and Sullivan Farms. John and Dede Sullivan shared the family's entrepreneurial story with Hereford juniors, which exposed them to thought-provoking ideas and encouraged them to reach their highest potential. Juniors also listened to a panel discussion featuring Matt Burkhart, Mark Sullivan and Luke Bolin about career experiences. The evening was completed with the Sullivan Supply Bay Bash, including a grill out and entertainment.

A vision of the future

As the conference came to a close, Cowan was pleased how the initial vision of the conference had truly come to life. Displaying their ability to lead, collaborate and communicate, juniors exemplified the conference's new mission.

"What struck a chord with me most is that NJHA members were challenged and as a result were provided with some great tools to add to their box that they will continue to build off," Cowan says.



The Sullivan Supply Bay Bash wrapped up the conference Friday night with lots of entertainment and fun!



“These tools will help them navigate through college and their career paths.”

Bailey Clanton, AHA national shows coordinator and youth activities assistant, highlights how impressive it was to witness NJHA members in action. “Our kids don’t back down from a challenge,” she says. “We saw what they are capable of in a matter of unique, real-world situations. They came up with solutions that we can really see being implemented in the industry.”

Heading into this conference I saw this as an opportunity to help make a positive difference for Hereford juniors. Instead, Hereford juniors had a huge influence on me.

What could I possibly say about the NJHA juniors that you all as AHA members do not already know? They are a group of insightful and kind young adults who are all more powerful than a punch. They have the drive and motivation to push beyond any obstacles in their way to seize an opportunity. Registering for this conference alone is a testimony to that. Sure, juniors signed up to spend a week with their friends and experience some pretty neat places, but they signed up for something a little different this year — a week of personal growth in the cornfields of Nebraska!

I was inspired by their amount of engagement, willingness to



uplift each other and drive to push themselves to new heights — and that is very exciting for the future of the Hereford breed and the cattle industry. To have juniors of this caliber learn to become successful while upholding strong morals and values should excite everyone for the future of the industry.

John Sullivan said it best, “There are so many people that are capable of doing big things and are just too scared to try. Don’t sell yourself short. You are the advantage, push yourself.” Ten years from now, a 2019 Faces of Leadership Conference attendee will be an industry entrepreneur, influencing youth across the nation. This summer, NJHA leaders and sponsors can take pride in knowing a young person’s future may have changed for the best through the mission of creating leaders, collaborating, and cultivating opportunities. **HW**

