

Foundation's Focus

by **Nancy Keilty**

Pride in the Breed

For those who were fortunate enough to attend the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Denver, I'm confident you would agree it was a spectacular extravaganza.

I was there to work in the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) booth, where I had the privilege of reacquainting myself with old junior members and their families and meeting new ones.

I could not help but feel proud of these young men and women as I listened to their stories, their hopes for the future, and their unbridled interest in the Hereford breed and agriculture. I also felt pride in the National Junior Hereford Association board for establishing and providing various contests and exciting new programs at JNHE and pride in HYFA for its role in providing scholarships to help Hereford youths further their education. I left Denver with a sense of pride and accomplishment, knowing we are making a positive difference in the lives of our youth, and the future of the breed looks very bright.

The letter

Upon arriving back at the farm in northern Michigan, my husband

and I were greeted with a second letter from a 9-year-old boy named Garrett. In it he spoke of his journey with a junior beef Hereford steer named Alex, including a wonderful photo of the two of them, which would culminate at the local county fair in the upcoming week. He had written by hand:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Keilty,

Hi, this is Alex and Garrett. This is the final letter before we head out Saturday, Aug. 3, to the Northwest Michigan Fair.

We have had many adventures together. Our 4-H club had a petting zoo for the cherry connection at the Hort Station as well as at the Lake Leelanau St. Mary Annual Festival dinner. Alex loved all the attention. We also went out to the fairgrounds for showmanship practice.

At the showmanship practice the scales were open so we were able to find out that Alex weighed 260 lb. on July 9. I am hoping to get him up to 308 lb. by the fair. He enjoys his 14% calf feed so hopefully we will reach our goal weight.

This has been a fun and educational year. I have learned a lot and hope to raise a junior beef next year. I really hope to raise Alex's brother or sister!

We hope you can come visit us at the fair. I have enclosed a schedule so you know when we are showing as well as an informational letter about the auction.

Thank you for taking the time to read about us. We hope to see you at the fair!

*Sincerely,
Garrett*

After reading this, I was reminded there is a whole world of kids out there who share the same love and enthusiasm for Hereford cattle. Further, you don't have to have a top animal in a top show to learn the same lessons of responsibility, integrity, family and community. This boy, and countless other boys and girls just like him, is just as important to the future of this breed.

We will meet him at the Northwest Michigan Fair in early August, and I know I will leave Traverse City with the same feelings of pride and comfort knowing that the future of the breed is in great hands. **HW**

Nancy Keilty serves on the Foundation's board of directors. She can be reached at nancykeilty@mindspring.com.

