

Yard Games in the Stockyard



National Hereford Queen Emily Meinhardt, Marysville, Kan., gives back to cattlemen through her service project.

by *Kayla Jennings*

Queen Service Project

“Move a little to the left. Easy! Ok, you are in the clear... crash!” Shouts of victory from a proud Jenga champion fill the yards as wood blocks topple across the ground to the competitor’s chagrin. Meanwhile, giggles echo from just a few feet over where girls are blowing bubbles and hula-hooping their hearts out, careful not to disturb the competitive checker duel next door. What appears to be a dogpile comes to view on the ground by the checker extraordinaire — could be a game of Twister?

“Duck!” A corn-filled bag comes flying by at a high rate of speed.

It must be from the cornhole tournament taking place among Hereford breeders young and old.

National Hereford Queen Emily Meinhardt made these memories possible for Hereford youth as part of her service project during the 2019 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) this year. Hereford youth flocked to a variety of yard games set up outside throughout the week to both enjoy time with their friends and to benefit cattle producers across Nebraska and Oklahoma who endured their share of hardship as a result of poor weather the last several months.

“Once the floods came through and everything had affected those states, I realized that this is affecting a lot of the cattlemen and our breeders,” Meinhardt reflects. “It was really important to give back to not just Hereford breeders but cattle breeders in general, so that we can rebuild those and keep the industry moving forward.”

Road to relief

When Meinhardt first set out to develop a service project to

benefit cattlemen, she knew it was important the project be twofold — benefiting the cause and Hereford youth. Her passion for facilitating friendship among others led her to the winning idea. Five dollars were given in exchange for a wristband to gain access to the games, dubbed Yard Games in the Stockyard, throughout the week.

“I’m very kids-oriented,” she explains. “I love working with the youth, and so I thought this was a neat way for me to be able to network with youth and be able to play along with them but also a way to raise money for the people that were affected by the flooding in Nebraska and Oklahoma. At the end of the day, kids got to have a fun time and also understand the importance of giving back to a service project.”

While the games were set out all week, the area was booming with young Hereford breeders the evening of the JNHE tailgate and concert. In addition, a donation jar was available for further giving. The queen surely knew what she was doing with this idea because youth members requested more games since so many of them wanted to play at the same time. Meinhardt abided and found more corn hole boards straightaway.

As the week and the service project concluded, it was a clear success. Not only did these few games aid in fostering friendships to last a lifetime, but the project allowed Meinhardt to donate more than \$1,200 to the cattleman of Nebraska and Oklahoma on behalf of the National Junior Hereford Association.

“It was really fun to work with the youth and make them realize the importance of a service project but also the importance of participating in events at junior nationals,” Meinhardt describes. “Seeing them have a good time was really exciting and rewarding for me. Yard Games in the Stockyard was a really great experience, and I think it’s something that not only benefited the cattlemen, but also the Hereford breed.” **HW**

