



Retiring National Junior Hereford Association board members are pictured (l to r): **Bailey Jones**, Darlington, Wis.; **Austin Matheny**, Mays Lick, Ky.; and **Brooke Hinojosa-Sidwell**, Carr, Colo.

Oldies, but Goodies

Austin Matheny, Brooke Hinojosa-Sidwell, Nathan Hopkins and Bailey Jones pass on their maroon jackets to new NJHA leadership.

by **Adrian Austin**

As the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors' chairman, Austin Matheny of Mays Lick, Ky., refers to himself and the three retiring board members alongside him as "the oldies." Facing the conclusion of their three-year board term, this group of passionate Hereford juniors, or "the oldies," take time to recollect their service to the organization.

Their story began in 2016 in Madison, Wis., when four eager, wide-eyed NJHA board candidates

buttoned up their maroon jackets for the first time. In the years to follow, Austin, Brooke Hinojosa-Sidwell, Nathan Hopkins and Bailey Jones have worked together to dedicate their time to the unique membership they serve — the NJHA Hereford youth from all across the U.S.

United in the spirit of service and love for Hereford cattle, these four embarked on their journey, armed with their maroon jackets and the task to be the best example possible for young people. Throughout this journey, they became world travelers and trailblazers, attending state and national shows, working rings across the country, and participating in meetings and conference calls. With new experiences and memories to cherish under their belt, their journey ended at the 2019 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Denver. The four retiring directors spoke from their hearts as they bid farewell, sharing final remarks with the membership and passing on their jackets to ambitious

new board members waiting to begin their own legacy.

Although their chapter as NJHA directors and officers has come to a close, these four are quick to share their drive for the Hereford breed, and their Hereford family is continuing to evolve. While each of them comes from a different background and has a separate plan for his or her future, they all share one similar thought — the devotion they hold for the Hereford industry will forever be in their blood.

Where it all began

Austin, Brooke, Nathan and Bailey cover a wide portion of the countryside, hailing from Kentucky, Colorado, Tennessee and Wisconsin, respectively. Although they represent various regions of the U.S., their beloved red-and-white cattle established a special place in each of their hearts from the beginning. Yet, after initially getting hooked on the breed, they realized the people behind the cattle were what made Herefords truly influential.

In northern Kentucky, a longtime history of raising Hereford cattle ties the Matheny family together. In fact, Austin acknowledged his lifetime of experiences in the industry pinpoints back to his grandfather, Charlie Boyd Sr. Following in the footsteps of the family's patriarch, Austin's uncle, Charlie Boyd, Jr., mother, Suzanne Boyd Matheny, and father, Andrew Matheny, who all served on the National Junior Polled Hereford Association board during their youth. Living and breathing Herefords since day one, Austin mentions he and his sister, Taylor Belle Matheny, newly elected NJHA board of directors' chairman, cannot imagine life without it. "It's just a family tradition," he says.

Clinging to the family tradition, Austin fondly recalls his first JNHE experience in Milwaukee, Wis., circa 2005. "My first JNHE was pretty cool because we were getting to spend time together as a family, with Hereford cattle, and then every night I watched the race car drivers practice

Retiring NJHA Board Members





at the Milwaukee Mile Speedway. It was the neatest experience for an 8-year-old boy to have,” he shares.

Bailey Jones also thinks back to that JNHE spent in Milwaukee in 2005 as her first year competing at junior national; however, she vividly details a different experience than Austin’s.

“I showed one yearling heifer my first year,” she says. “There were large fans in the middle of the ring because it was really hot and the coliseum was open-sided and had no fans or AC. My heifer got spooked by the giant fans and got away from me, so then my twin brother and I showed her together and she got away from both of us. Finally, a board member had to help us hang on to her so that we could finish the class.”

For the 22-year-old from Darlington, Wis., her wild showing experience left her in admiration of the NJHA board members from a young age. “The board helping me out at my first junior nationals when my heifer got away, not once, but twice made me want to help younger members the way I was helped and to light the fire of passion for the Hereford breed,” she mentions.

In Tennessee, the son of fourth-generation Hereford breeders found his way to his first JNHE in Tulsa, Okla., in 2009. “My first JNHE was a blast,” Nathan Hopkins says with a grin. “I was probably more focused on the basketball than the cattle — my younger brother and I played up an age division with our older brother, and we made it to the finals of the 3-on-3 basketball tournament.”

Nathan highlights that improvements were made before the next year’s JNHE. “We all practiced showing together, and the next



year I got third in the finals of showmanship,” he mentions. Nathan takes pride in the fact that raising Hereford cattle has been a huge part of not only his life but also his family’s, sharing they were all able to advance in the quality and knowledge of their operation over the years.

Brooke Hinojosa-Sidwell also speaks of the family affair that began with the development of Sidwell Herefords in Carr, Colo. “My uncle Larry and Grandma and Grandpa Stangle helped me get my start raising and showing Hereford cattle,” she says. “I realized the NJHA was a perfect fit, because I gained more than a Hereford family, I became part of a family that shared the same passion as me.”

For Brooke everything came full circle as the JNHE returned to Denver this year, where it all began for her in 2007. Similar to most of her counterparts, Brooke shares her first experience at the JNHE was a time when she met several new friends and got out of her comfort zone. Perhaps a little different, though, is one specific memory that Brooke recalls: “I gave a speech about my steer named Harry, and I had the privilege of meeting Randy Owen and singing Song of the South in the stalls.”

Setting the stage

Keeping in mind their beginning JNHE memories, all four of these Hereford enthusiasts mention being inspired by the work of those who wore the maroon jackets before them. While past board members and candidates alike set the stage for what hard work and passion should look like, all four of them found personal experiences with junior board members to be inspiring as well.

“At my first junior nationals, Nicole Starr, a huge influence on my life and someone I would consider a mentor, was elected to the board. I knew that I wanted to be like her someday,” Bailey notes.

Similar to Bailey, Austin highlights how several of his good friends had the opportunity to serve on the board before him. Once the campaigning process began, Austin decided to be true to his roots and loved every minute of it.

“One of my big things was being an open individual, who is able to talk to other people and carry on a conversation,” he says. “You should never feel like you’re better than anybody else. There are always other junior members that would love to speak to a board member but are sometimes too shy to say hi to them, and that’s where I felt I could be an asset to the board.”

Austin shares future junior board candidates may want to consider this same process of creating personal relationships while campaigning. “Even if I didn’t know you, I’d get to know you,” he says. “Everybody can give a speech and try to say something memorable, but building a personal connection with each of the candidates and junior members that were voting — that’s what really propels you.”

Nathan agrees building relationships and making new friends was the best part of running for the board. “The day I submitted my application, my three brothers, my mom and my dad told me that they had my back... and did they ever,” Nathan says with a smile. “I saw the shyest group of people become the most outgoing, ‘politically active’

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group of people in the barn! What I'm saying is that a lot of friends were made!"

For the girls the campaigning process and time spent on the junior board opened their eyes to the countless hours of service NJHA directors put in over the three-year term.

"I view the junior board as the backbone of junior nationals. Before running, I was not sure what all they do to put on the show. Now that I am on the board, I tend to ask myself, 'what don't we do,'" Brooke shares. "Plus, it made me realize we could not put on a show like this without the generous help from our advisors and donors."

The unfortunate part of the campaign process is each year only four board members are elected, while one or more candidates go home empty-handed. For Bailey that feeling was all too familiar — yet also something which encouraged her to work harder and not to give up.

"I ran twice for the junior board," she admits. "The second year, I really focused on my work ethic and my slogan was 'Hard Work Makes It Happen.'"

Bailey knew better than to be defeated. Instead, she pushed on with the hope of inspiring her own younger siblings, along with fellow youth members, to not quit on a dream.

Dreams become reality

For these four board members, lifelong dreams were fulfilled when their arms slipped into the coveted maroon jackets. Yet, they all share they did

not expect their time on the junior board to fly by so fast. Flash forward three years later, and pride was evident on their faces as they overlooked a showing containing eight expectant board candidates at this year's awards ceremony on July 11 in Denver. Along with that pride, though, was an obvious twinge of bittersweet melancholy, as the group of four couldn't help but think back to their election night three short years ago.

That year, there was a special election for the fourth jacket, and Bailey was cognizant of what that meant. Well aware there was a chance she might once again go home empty-handed, Bailey was nervous as she watched Austin and Brooke receive their jackets first.

"I knew that I had to get one of the first three jackets, otherwise I would miss out on that coveted maroon jacket for a second year in a row," she says. "I remember seeing Austin and Brooke both get their jackets and getting more and more nervous as Taryn Adcock stood up to give her final address."

Nerves and the large crowd made it hard for Bailey to keep track of the retiring director who would pass her the coat. "I lost Taryn in the crowd as she walked, and I knew there were a few other candidates sitting right by me," Bailey recalls. "I just grabbed the hands of my friends that were behind me and shut my eyes. All of a sudden, I heard Taryn behind me. I was in shock. I started crying because I could not believe that I had been elected to the board."

Brooke admits she, too, was in complete shock to the extent the election night was a blur to her. With the high stakes, the large crowd and her rapid heartbeat, she mentions the feeling of being handed the coat was beyond words.

"It was a whirlwind of emotions that I will never forget," she says.

Nathan highlights the same feeling of relentless emotion and excitement. "I was in a cold sweat, shaking at the knees, yet trying not to seem nervous. As the time came, I saw the coat disappear into the massive audience. I closed my eyes and there she was!"

For Austin the memory of being handed the jacket speaks volumes about the friendships that the junior program builds. "Some of my best friends were on the junior board before me, and I got to attend college with them. Cody Jensen handed me my maroon jacket," he says with a smile.

Austin highlights the way the election process can push a young person out of his or her comfort zone and what a humbling experience it is to be handed a jacket.

"It's a big deal for any junior member to step out and put yourself out there for other people," he notes. "And then to finally feel like you've reached one of your larger goals in life was such a humbling feeling. Especially to be handed the jacket by one of your closer friends."

Making a change

Once the emotions settled after being elected, these four board members began to cultivate a deeper understanding of the responsibility they had as NJHA directors. With their minds set on making a positive influence and setting great examples for the membership, they did not shy away from the challenge.

Diving headfirst into conference calls, long meetings and long-term planning, these four were eager to be a part of the decision-making process that could pave the way for the next generation of Hereford youth. After listening to them talk, it was easy to tell how the group work together like a well-oiled machine, as they each noted the same goal they had set for themselves.

"The four oldies now, we all kind of came up with this idea one night for how we could make an impact on junior members," Austin explains. "In middle school or high school, kids don't always know where they want to go to college and aren't thinking about a career. We wanted to create an experience that would help them make those decisions."

Brooke chimes in, emphasizing this experience is what NJHA now refers to as Bridging the Gap. In the quest to help youth discover their



passion and plans for the future, the board announced the inaugural Bridging the Gap college and career fair, and the event made its debut at the 2019 JNHE.

With the goal of connecting NJHA members with collegiate and industry professionals, the four retiring directors were proud to see their vision come to life.

“Hereford juniors are highly regarded and represent the utmost in talent,” Nathan says. “What better way to feed their potential than provide avenues for education, internships, careers and future endeavors?”

It’s not goodbye; it’s see you later

After such a large level of commitment and responsibility demonstrated by these directors, they all describe how much they will miss certain elements of the junior board experience. While all of them are dedicated to a lifetime of raising Hereford cattle and still intend to stay connected, one constant piece sticks out for each of them.

“As we get older, we take different paths in life,” Austin shares. “I know it’s a part of growing up, but I will miss seeing some of my best friends so often.”

The rest of the group echoes his comments, sharing how much they will miss the people met and the miles traveled. Each of them makes it apparent how the NJHA is a family to them, and their time on the junior board opened doors to make friendships and connections they never knew were possible before.

Setting aside their bittersweet feelings, these four directors reiterate at the end of the day, they are overwhelmed with thankfulness and appreciation for everyone who has helped them achieve this lifelong dream. Sharing words of gratitude in thanks to their advisors, parents, siblings and several others, all of them agree the people will be what stamp their memory when they think back to their three years spent serving the Hereford membership.

What’s next?

Although Austin, Brooke, Nathan and Bailey have now passed their maroon jackets on to four new directors, their time with Hereford is only beginning.

For Austin, settling into his role as cow herd manager at home in Kentucky is a work in progress. After graduating from Kansas State University in the spring of 2018 with an animal science, production option, degree, he returned home to continue the tradition and legacy his family has established in the Hereford breed. Over the past few years, he has grown his cow herd to serve as a foundation for expansion. “It all comes with time, but I’m going to continue to build my herd. I plan to be in this Hereford business my whole life,” Austin says.

Brooke agrees lifelong involvement is in her future. In the fall she will be a senior at Oklahoma State University, where she will obtain a dual degree in agribusiness and accounting. After college Brooke hopes to stay in the agricultural field, working for either a breed association or an agricultural accounting firm. With a deep passion for the breed, Brooke hopes to someday put her degree to use in a way that benefits these red-and-white cattle and the membership. “I plan to get involved on the adult side of the association and try to put my degree to work with members of the association,” she emphasizes.

Nathan’s and Bailey’s futures look slightly different from the rest, yet they both circle back to service. Nathan graduated from Vanderbilt University



with a degree in molecular and cellular biology this past spring and is currently a Division 1 student at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Dentistry in Memphis, Tenn.

While dental school will keep Nathan busy, he still stays devoted to the Hereford program his family has built over the years. “I plan on returning to middle Tennessee to practice dentistry, while continuing to help with the family Hereford operation,” Nathan says.

Bailey’s career will also focus on helping others. She recently graduated school at Madison Area Technical College with her associate degree as a paramedic technician. While she is currently involved with a couple of paramedic services, she notes she plans to help her younger siblings as they continue with their time in the youth program.

Perhaps Austin said it best when he said that going separate ways is all a part of growing up. Yet, these four young people can now start blazing their next path with the unwavering confidence and constant reminder their time as NJHA directors provided them with valuable life lessons and relationships. Undoubtedly, the memories made, and the time spent in this organization will motivate these four young adults for years to come and keep them hooked on the Hereford business for the rest of their lives. In the words of Austin, “these oldies aren’t finished just yet.” **HW**



Nathan Hopkins, Winchester, Tenn., with his retiring NJHA board director award.