

# Youth Movement | Better Together

by **Montana Lawrence**

Spring has always been my favorite time of year. Growing up in the great state of Minnesota, I'm used to long winters that never seem to end. After months and months of snow and freezing weather, spring is the time when the whole world comes back to life and I can finally see the joys of summer blooming on the horizon.

## Build relationships

Spring is also an exciting time of the year for the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board. It is this time of year when our board sets plans in motion for the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), the Faces of Leadership Conference

and state show visits. It has been a joy to participate in these events at the capacity that I have over the last two years. Several times in the past year, I have received letters, text messages and emails from Hereford juniors, new friends and industry professionals. Each time I travel with the junior board, I make connections with new people, but I'm constantly surprised by the number of familiar faces which make me feel at home when I'm far from it.

Looking toward the summer months and the many events the NJHA has, I think it is important to consider what parts of the junior experience are most valuable. In planning the JNHE and the Faces of Leadership Conference, the junior board has gone to great lengths to ensure members gain a new understanding about leadership, entrepreneurship, and future education and employment in the agricultural industry.

There are countless contests at the JNHE intended to test juniors' skills in the areas of beef industry knowledge, food preparation, marketing, public speaking, showmanship, livestock judging and so much more. I have participated in many of these contests and activities during my time as a junior member. Though I gained a wealth of knowledge and education by participating, I found the most value in the relationships I have built.

## Pen-to-Pen

When juniors attend the JNHE or the Faces of Leadership Conference, they have the chance to make connections with fellow members from all over the country, while also strengthening current the friendships. One event, which

I am most excited to participate in this summer, is the Pen-to-Pen program, which will be hosted at the JNHE. The program was first introduced in 2018 as a mentorship opportunity for juniors of all ages. Each participant is paired with a pen pal with whom he or she corresponds long after the JNHE is over.

This year the junior board has chosen to expand the event and its activities in order to give juniors more time to connect with their pal. This event has been wildly successful over the past two years, and I am excited to watch members connect, learn and build new friendships through this opportunity. I truly believe the connections we make as young people influence our future. I've often heard it said, "Show me your friends, I'll show you your future."

## Grow with the NJHA

My personal vision for the NJHA centers on the idea that we are better together. Each individual brings different insights and experiences to the table. When juniors share their experiences, they all become stronger. There is nothing more exciting than walking through the show barn and seeing seasoned members teaching new members how to fit a show heifer or watching huge groups of kids play games together in their stalls.

Watching young people grow together is my favorite part of serving this association. You are unique, and you bring something to the table no one else does. The people you will meet can learn from you, and you will learn from them. Participate because we are better together. **HW**



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