

by Amy Cowan

Finish Strong

It's the start of a new month, and with that comes green grass and new life on the ranch, and in this time of so many unknowns, green grass and baby calves bring lots of hope. On March 14, I returned from the World Hereford Conference in New Zealand during which I had the pleasure of traveling with six of our Hereford youth as they represented the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) and competed in the Young Breeders Competition. These travel scholarships were made possible by the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA), and I was the lucky one to experience firsthand this investment pay off in huge ways as I watched these young adults gain a global perspective of the Hereford industry and agriculture.

Our time abroad

Team members Keayla Harr, Tyler Allan, Taylor Belle Matheny and Abigail Spindle made the U.S. very proud with their third-place overall finish in the Young Breeder Competition, just two points shy of second place. A highlight for Team USA was winning the group presentation competition and getting to present on a world stage to the entire World Hereford Conference delegation as they devised a plan to work with President Trump's administration to help bridge the agriculture gap and disconnect between urban and rural sectors. Hannah Williams and Rylee Barber were HYFA's OXO World Hereford Traveler representatives, and these young ladies networked and took

advantage of this adventure of a lifetime to grow and to explore new cultures, and I could not be prouder of their leadership.

When Team USA boarded flights to New Zealand, the coronavirus was definitely making headlines. Fast forward 10 days later as we walked back through customs, COVID-19 was real in the U.S. and here we were back home, finding our new normal. Now, weeks later, we are still adapting. We are working from home, we have survived our 14-day quarantines, we are using social distancing and we don't know for certain what the next 30-60 days look like. What we do know is the Hereford breed will finish strong by keeping things in perspective and knowing that we are only a small link in the chain, but we are essential when it comes to feeding the world.

Our time adapting

In an online meeting offered by HYFA's investment team at UMB Bank in which I recently participated, the team referred to the swiftly changing economic times and market conditions as "The Great Adaptation." All of the ways in which we are having to adapt to slow the spread and to flatten the curve of the virus changes economic activity in the short term and could quite possibly affect some behaviors in the long run. KC Mathews, chief investment officer for UMB Bank, talked about the unprecedented times we are living in and offered some insight into the team's investment philosophies as they look at history but realize to some degree there

is really nothing with which to compare COVID-19.

What's next? Where do we go from here? Do the investment experts at UMB have all the answers we are looking for in these uncertain economic times? The answer is "no," but the silver lining is that investing in a firm foundation like the HYFA is that we are committed to the future and investing for future generations.

As we look at HYFA's investment portfolio and compare the market value on March 31, 2020, to what it was on Dec. 31, 2019, it is significantly different. However, I was reassured after this week's meeting that our investment team is taking a cautious approach to the current situation and that our investments are in good hands. The advice they gave us and the approach they are taking is to stay focused and not to become too emotional. There are going to be risks in this journey. There will be an upside, but for now we need to try to block out our fears, tackle our challenges head on, and, in the long run, HYFA will finish strong.

Be well my friends, and rest assured we are remaining positive as we look to the future. That future includes scholarships and awards for NJHA members and events like the Junior National Hereford Expo and Faces of Leadership that grow our young people to finish strong as they pursue their passions and careers that may someday land them on the world's stage. **HW**

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