

The Perfect Combination

by Taylor Belle Matheny

At the age of 9 when I attended my first Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), I didn't realize my parents were setting me loose on a path to find opportunities I would cherish for a lifetime. One of my fondest opportunities began in Louisville, Ky., at the 2017 JNHE. I can recall pacing the halls of the Kentucky Expo Center, repeating my speech over and over again, catching glimpses of the other candidates practicing. My heart still starts to race thinking about addressing the delegates, but that moment didn't compare to the night I would find

out if I was elected to the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors. Was I really going to get a maroon jacket? As it ends up, I did.

Party of four

I remember the four of us getting our maroon jackets in Broadbent on the vibrant green chips. Add in Hereford cattle and it was a perfect combination, if you ask me. But the combination put together so perfectly was the four of us new directors. Walking out of Broadbent that night, I thought to myself, "Those are three pretty impressive people — it is going to be a lot of fun to see what we can do in three years." If only I had known then what I know now. They are three incredibly talented people who have undoubtedly shaped the trajectory of the NJHA and the course of my life.

First, you have to understand what makes our team perfect. The four of us have different backgrounds, talents and interests — each bringing something different to the table. As a member of the NJHA, you have the opportunity to find friends from across the country who share a similar passion but have different talents who can push you to grow. My challenge to each of you is to find a person like Rylee Barber, Brandt Downing or Hannah Williams to be on your team.

When I say you need to find someone like these three, I mean you need to find someone who pushes you to strive to be the best you can be in all aspects of your



life. A friend like Rylee comes around once in a lifetime. She is the type of person who will put others before herself, thinks through the logistics of a situation before a decision is made and, more importantly, will pick up the phone whenever you need a friend. When you find a friend like Rylee, who is determined to make the best better, you are challenged to continually make yourself better.

Picture a horse-drawn carriage, and imagine Brandt as the horse carrying the three of us girls in the carriage. Over the course of the last three years, Brandt has been the workhorse of our team who has completed the tasks few want to do, but the ones that need to be done. It does not matter what you ask of Brandt, he will do it and make sure it is done well with a smile that is contagious. When you find a friend like Brandt, who will lend a helping hand wherever it is needed, you are inspired to pitch in to get the job done.

While you are on a mission to find your friends through the NJHA, I encourage you to find a



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person like Hannah who will push you outside your comfort zone. From jet setting to New Zealand to being in the meeting room, Hannah has been the one to push us past our comfort zone. When you find a friend like Hannah, who never lets you miss out on trying a new experience, you broaden your

horizons and have a lot of fun while doing so.

The four of us have had our fair share of memories from conferences to hanging out in our college towns together to a trip across the globe. I will cherish this experience for a lifetime. Juniors, my challenge to you

is to find people like Rylee, Brandt and Hannah to be on your team. Life is challenging, oftentimes fun and always better when you have the right people cheering for you. I found an incredible team in these three, and my hope is that you are able to find your team through the NJHA. **HW**

My Best Memories

by Rylee Barber

Twenty-two years passed by in the blink of an eye. I never thought the day would come when I would officially retire from the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA), and as the 2020 event looms closer, I dread it more every day. The NJHA has been my home since the minute I attended my first Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in E. Lansing, Mich., for Spartan Time in 1999. I was only a year old at the time, and I have missed only one JNHE since.

Valuing the memories

The JNHE has always been and will continue to be the highlight of my summer. It is where I have met some of my best friends, made countless memories and spent time with my family. My family has been involved in the NJHA for too many years to count, so it is no surprise most of our family pictures happen at the JNHE. While each and every JNHE is special in its own way, these last three years have been something spectacular.

Serving on the junior board was something I wanted to do since 2006. I was at my first JNHE where I was able to exhibit, and my heifer was not the most kid friendly. I was the typical peewee showman getting stepped on and head butted and, in all honestly, the heifer

was leading me around more than I was leading her. Then came the maroon jackets. They were there every step of the way lending a helping hand. The same was true for the next year and the year after.

When I ran for the board, I had several goals in mind about how to help improve the NJHA. One of my personal goals was to be the board member I needed as a little kid every time I stepped in that ring. I have been that kid in those boots before, and I know the difference it can make when you just need a little help.

I call the NJHA home because it is where my family is. Oftentimes we talk about the Hereford family and what it means to us, but from the outside looking in, you cannot understand it. And from the inside looking out, you cannot explain it. My “boardie” family has truly been amazing over the past three years. From our trusty board moms, who take care of us every step of the way, to the three who have served by my side, there will never be enough words to adequately express my thanks.

If you have already read Taylor Belle’s article you will know the four of us have truly become a team over the years, but there is one thing she missed — Taylor Belle is our fearless leader; she sticks up for us and for our causes



without hesitation. She will be the first one to cheer us on but also the first one to tell us when we are slacking. Our team would not be complete without her serving as our chairman. She is truly one of a kind.

Dr. Seuss says it best, “You will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory.” The memories made serving over the past three years are treasures for which I will be eternally grateful. Thank you, NJHA, for electing me to serve and for being the best Hereford family I could ask for. **HW**