

Taking a Chance, Making a Change

“We maybe had a blowout trailer tire, spent two days in a downpour, thought we would get struck by lightning, wrecked two tents in the storm and got some scratches on our truck from the flying debris. But this really was a great weekend!”

Yep. More accurate words were never spoken. Our 12-year-old, Nolan, had perfectly summed up our outing to the Indiana and Illinois state Hereford preview shows the last weekend of June. We couldn't have predicted that blowout trailer tire on I-65 in heavy traffic, just 3.8 miles from the Boone County Fairgrounds in Indiana. We couldn't have predicted the surprise storm that arose at the Adams County Fairgrounds in Illinois — especially after we checked the forecast at 3:45 that morning, noting a 0% chance of rain for the day. And we couldn't have predicted several popup tents being destroyed in that storm — including one breakaway that flew into our truck and trailer as it passed by.

But the craziest thing about it?

We absolutely could have predicted all of the good that came from the weekend. Seeing longtime friends after being separated for far too long. Watching our boy in the showring doing what he loves most in life.

Celebrating small wins and personal successes. Witnessing my husband, Craig, teaching Nolan how to change a tire.

I was so proud of Nolan for recognizing the good from the weekend, when it would have been easy to focus on the challenges. Very easy.

Sometimes, we think we have it all planned out, but we just never know what may be around the bend. And it's true in my career, too. I'm embarking on an adventure in my life — one that I never saw coming, either.

Last fall, I began substitute teaching in our local school district. That soon turned into a full-time substitute teaching position in high school freshman science. Although the subject matter wasn't necessarily my thing, I absolutely loved being in the classroom and working with the youth.

What began as a way to get out of the house a few days a week during the winter, when my freelance business is slower, grew into much more.

It really got me thinking.

I'm 20 years into agricultural writing and a photography career. I was honored to serve 11 years on the



Livestock Publications Council board of directors, including a term as president. I'm just ending my term on the AAEA — The Agricultural Communicators Network board of directors — currently as past president. I've worked with some of the greatest publications in the industry, including the one you're reading right now. And I have a few awards on the wall that were much appreciated and hard earned.

But what about the next 20 years of my career before retirement? After much prayer and many long conversations with Craig, it's become clear. I'm ready for a change. When this publication prints, I will have begun my master's degree program in secondary education, humanities; and

I will be preparing for a long-term substitute teaching position in our local middle school.

Does this sound exciting to me? Absolutely! Am I also terrified? Without a doubt. Making a job change is scary. Completely changing careers, midstream, is petrifying. I've had my “What in the actual world am I doing!?” moments. But I also truly believe this is what I'm being called to do.

I'm so very thankful to the *Hereford World* staff for allowing me to continue writing this column each issue; and I'll continue my portrait photography business on a smaller scale. But otherwise, things are changing. We can't always see what awaits us at the next step, in the next minute. But we can be open to change and to the new possibilities if we just take a chance. I hope to carry Nolan's optimism with me as I navigate this new chapter in my life.

And I'm honored to be sharing this adventure with you, as well. Here's to the next chapter for this Hereford mom. Hopefully, with no major storms or blowouts on the interstate. **HW**

Christy Couch Lee is a freelance writer from Wellington, Ill. She can be reached at christy@ceeleecommunications.com.