

Where Are They Now?

Thousands of young cattle enthusiasts have had many of their best memories through involvement in the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA). The NJHA hopes to shape young, responsible leaders, and it has done just that. Many NJHA alumni are in the industry now raising Hereford cattle, taking on impressive careers and even bringing their kids back to the Junior National Hereford Expo every summer. Follow this series to read more about just a few past NJHA members who are making a difference in the industry.



Give Your Time and Talent

**An accomplished entrepreneur shares how the
Hereford breed influenced his life and career.**

by *Grace Vehige*

“**Y**ou all load up the pickup and trailer, and you’ll be fine. Go out to this event.”

With these words of encouragement from his father, Don Endres and his older brother, Greg, registered their animals to attend the third annual National Junior Polled Hereford Heifer Show and Forum in 1976. Due to harvest season at home, the 15- and 19-year-old boys ventured off to Louisville, Ky., on their own.

“It was an adventure just navigating our way to get there and to find the show, but it was a great

experience. We had to plan it out... study maps and make sure we had everything loaded and animals cared for,” Endres says.

Little did Endres know, navigating to Louisville and back helped pave the roadway for a successful future.

From Hereford to CEO

Endres grew up in Watertown, S.D., and raised Hereford cattle alongside his father and eight siblings. After years of exhibiting Hereford 4-H projects, the South Dakota native made it to

Louisville for the junior national. The great folks he met and the memories that were made that year made a lasting impression on Endres. At the ninth National Junior Polled Hereford Heifer Show and Forum in Wisconsin in 1982, he was elected to the junior board of directors.

As for board of director duties, many tasks the junior board carries out today are just the same as they were in the '80s: planning the events and reviewing the schedule. However, the job is not merely just behind-the-scenes work. Junior board members had the opportunity to host games and events at the show and even reviewed some of the National Junior Merit Award winners.

One of the unique things Endres highlighted was a herd-simulation computer game. Any junior member was eligible to play.

"The game made you sit down and really think about things because it's purely driven off the EPDs of the animals, as well as the accuracy of those EPDs," he explains.

According to him, the game provided a digital herd and all the specs and traits along with it. After participating in the game, members would mail their simulations into the Association's office in order to receive results and placings.

"As young breeders, you tend to eyeball things and try to guess at what you think would be the best mating. But, those traits and those EPDs and accuracies, if you really spent your time on it, can help you get better at those decisions. It was interesting to see how much better we could get on our average performance as we continued to play the game," Endres reflects.

During his service to the junior board, Endres was enrolled at South Dakota State University (SDSU), where he achieved a degree in animal science with minors in computer science and economics.

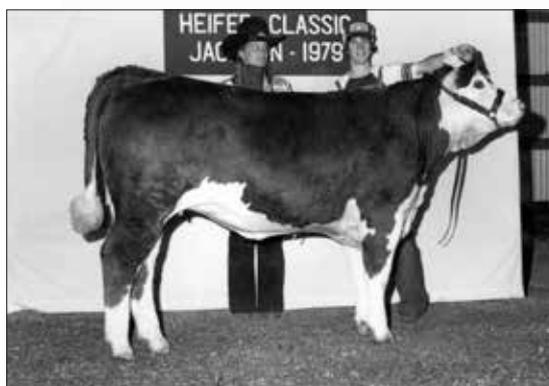
The SDSU Jackrabbit shares, "Early in my business career, I really focused on the computer science and business side, launching a couple of companies and ultimately exiting those, selling those to public companies."

Although Endres had intentions of returning to his family operation and continuing the business, he was presented new opportunities and has since acquired more than 25 years of experience in building, operating and managing successful businesses.

"I had an opportunity to work as a business systems programmer for the university. So, I decided to do that and let the farm economy heal up, and that led to another business and here we are today," he describes.



Don Endres was elected to the National Junior Polled Hereford Association board of directors at the association's ninth Heifer Show and Forum in Wisconsin in 1982.



Endres poses with his heifer at the 1979 Heifer Classic in Jackson, Minn.

Innovative ideas and a knack for business led Endres to be named the Entrepreneur of the Year by the SDSU College of Engineering in 2000 and then presented with the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Award for "Emerging Entrepreneur" in 2005.

While his background in business lies within the alternative energy industry and online payment systems and companies, the "Emerging Entrepreneur" found his way back to the agricultural industry. Currently, Endres is the CEO and cofounder of Novita Nutrition, which produces highly digestible protein.

Lessons to last a lifetime

Often times, Endres is asked how his team is so successful. He attributes their success to great teamwork, as well as the luck of being in the right place at the right time.

"There are lots of times when we encountered challenges," the CEO says. "We just worked through them and eventually found success."

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A huge advocate for youth development programs, Endres (l) hosted South Dakota's 2019-20 state FFA officer team at Novita Nutrition headquarters to inspire the next generation of leaders.

Even with years of experience in the business world, Endres links his involvement with the Hereford breed and the great people who are a part of the Association to his achievements. Families and individuals that made a lasting impact on Endres include his parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, and family friends Phil and Joyce Ellis and family, and Pete Atkins, to name a few.

"Without a doubt, the experience I had with the Hereford breed led me to pursue a degree in animal science and business, and I've been able to really use that experience, that knowledge, that love for animals and working with livestock people to grow a business over time," he affirms.

His experience is a testament to the National Junior Hereford Association's (NJHA) mission to develop leaders of tomorrow, and he compares showbox conversations to classroom lessons in that an individual can learn so much from their experiences and from other people. He says it best: "I think one of the things that is a little overlooked is how wonderful it is to grow up on a ranch around livestock, to learn good work ethic and animal care skills, and how to work with people."

Though it has been years since he has been able to attend a junior national, the Novita CEO still notes the value of youth livestock programs and encourages junior members to become more

Novita Nutrition

Animal protein nutrition company Novita Nutrition produces two branded products including NovaMeal®, a highly digestible protein for the dairy and beef market, and



NovaOil®, a renewable oil used in animal feed. According to Don Endres, CEO of the Brookings, S.D., based company, Novita Nutrition helps maximize the genetic potential of animals by working with nutritionists to properly formulate the product into the ration.

"We feed approximately 500,000 cows NovaMeal today. We are expanding the plant and should have the capability in a few months to feed 600,000 cows per day," Endres says.

The Novita team was awarded the 2016 People's Choice Award for NovaMeal by Dairy Herd Management and the Incubator Company of the Year Award by the Brookings Innovation Center. For more information about Novita Nutrition, visit NovitaNutrition.com. **HW**



involved with the NJHA to develop a network of people, despite life's distractions.

While Endres's business success can hardly be labeled as one of life's distractions, he hopes one day to slow down on the business side and to have a small ranch with Hereford cows. The past board member leaves with this: "I highly encourage juniors to get involved, not only with showing animals but getting involved with the breed association as well. Contribute your time and talent... You learn a lot. You develop a lot of great relationships and benefits that will help you throughout your life." **HW**



The 2018-19 American Hereford Association Board of Directors toured Novita Nutrition's facilities in Brookings, S.D., during the 2019 summer Board meeting. Endres says a huge takeaway of working in the Hereford industry is learning how to help customers be successful.