

Look Down

For a change in perspective, try seeking inspiration from younger generations.



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Describing who you admire is often synonymous with describing who you look up to — someone older, wiser and more experienced. By default, we look up for guidance. While I aspire to be someone worth emulating, when I am around someone younger I rarely think, “I want to be like them when I’m older.”

Throughout this issue of the *Hereford World* junior members share stories about people who have inspired them. The retiring National Junior Hereford Association directors share their parting words on Page 68 and the champion senior showman thanks her mentors on Page 86. Vice versa, turn to Page 114 to see how the Advisors of the Year have inspired members of the Junior Hereford Association of Oklahoma and beyond.

One such member is Parker Cantrell, who was named Junior Hereford Herdsman of the Year. Starting on Page 72, Parker recounts the many people who have coached and encouraged him. All the while, his work ethic and attitude have inspired those around him, including me.

Challenge accepted

On day two of the 2020 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) I met Parker when he stopped at the awards backdrop to take a photo. At some point in the conversation we discovered we both have Type 1 diabetes. Finally, someone who understood my struggles!

For those of us with chronic illnesses, fast and furious events like livestock shows sure disrupt how we manage our diseases that require 24/7 attention. During JNHE my “typical” routine for exercising, eating and checking my blood sugar was nonexistent. That week, my blood sugar crept so high I felt like throwing

up, it dropped so low I could barely form a sentence to ask someone for a soda. It’s hard to admit without feeling ashamed I can’t take care of myself, and I avoid talking about it because the recurring response I get is, “Why did you let it get that bad?”

I didn’t have to worry about that criticism from Parker. He told me he also struggles with finding time to check his blood sugars when things get busy — which is all the time working cattle. He told me about the continuous glucose monitor (CGM) he wears, a sensor that transmits blood sugar readings every five minutes to your smartphone using Bluetooth.

I have met many younger Type 1’s over the years, but I naturally look up to older diabetics for advice to handle the obstacles to come. How limiting. Listening to Parker, it dawned on me someone with less experience could extend wisdom to my 25-plus years of know-how. I felt reassured. Reassurance is inspiring.

At the end of the week Parker was named Junior Hereford Herdsman of the Year and I couldn’t help but feel proud, knowing he couldn’t have achieved this feat if he wasn’t taking care of his health. I was also happy for him, knowing this achievement will bring him the self-confidence to fight future health battles.

I am happy to say I have been wearing a CGM for two weeks now and it has made a huge difference in managing my numbers, especially during deadline week for this issue. Thank you, Parker, for giving me a new perspective.

Join me in thanking the entire American Hereford Association staff for working so hard to make the 2020 JNHE a reality. I would also like to give a shout-out to Grace Vehige, this year’s Hereford Publications Inc. (HPI)

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intern. As her namesake foretells, Grace inspired me daily to face challenges with dignity. Before you flip the pages forward, please enjoy a few words from my talented peer.

United as one

As someone who grew up in the cattle industry, interning and working for a breed association has always been a

part of my plan, but little did I know what the future would bring. My family raises Gelbvieh and Balancer cattle and, to me, my breed association served as constant assurance of people who would always support and encourage me.

When I began applying for internships last fall, the HPI internship came across my search

feed. I knew I wanted to intern with a communications team, I knew I wanted to work for a breed association, and I knew I liked writing and photography. What I did not know was that I would find another community of people to bring into my "circle." I am grateful the American Hereford Association and HPI staff welcomed me to their team, and I cannot say thank you enough for allowing me the opportunity.

Attending JNHE was a highlight of the internship as I not only witnessed another breed's junior national, but I was able to work behind the scenes to capture moments that mean the most to people. If anything, my time at JNHE made me realize how special the livestock industry is and how we are able to gather as one, even under extraordinary circumstances.

This summer taught me many things, but my favorite takeaway is knowing I can always "Come Home to Hereford." **HW**

— Grace Vehige

