

My Hereford, My Family, My Home

Several weeks ago, I found myself on an airplane flying home from Kansas City, Mo., the host city of “Come Home to Hereford” the 2020 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). I sat beside my younger brother, Wyatt, who serves alongside me on the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors.

Both of us were exhausted from the festivities of the week, and for most of the flight, it was hard to keep our eyes open. I have had the privilege of attending five JNHEs during my time as a junior member. I have walked away from each one with a tremendous sense of accomplishment, pride and, yes, exhaustion, but there was something more to it this year. As I sat on that plane considering the events of the week and trying to

keep myself awake, it all felt surreal.

Trials and tribulations lead to triumph

In the spring and early summer months of this year, our junior board spent many hours on Zoom calls trying to determine whether hosting the JNHE would be possible. There were many times during those calls when I did not believe the JNHE would take place and, in fact, there were moments when we all sat in silence considering the possibility of calling the whole event off. Through all those conversations, there was one factor that kept the dream of hosting the expo alive — the junior members.

On more than one occasion, one of my fellow board members would say, “We have to give these kids something to look forward to this summer. With all the disappointments, they deserve a win.” When it came to final decisions, the junior board resolved to host an event no matter the restrictions or changes it might require. The senior most members of the junior association and staff of the American Hereford Association made huge adjustments and concessions to support this vision. Though our junior board worked hard to see this JNHE through, there are countless others who went above and beyond to make this event a reality.

There were concessions that had to be made at the JNHE, and it was a different experience from what we are used to. The event was shortened, certain contests were conducted virtually and mask-wearing was required.



Despite all these changes, close to 700 juniors, their families and Hereford cattle made the trip to Kansas City.

I never could have anticipated the joy and excitement each of our members brought with them. The struggles that riddled the journey to JNHE by no means dampened the spirit of our membership. The past few months have been difficult for many people, and for some the prospect of even attending the JNHE may have been daunting. For that reason, I would like to thank the members, their parents and friends for “showing up!”

Thank you for being flexible and understanding. You brought your best at a time when the world seems to be at its worst. We talk so often about the family of people who make up the Hereford breed. This JNHE proved to me nothing can keep this group of people down. When all is said and done, our juniors and their families will still show up with a smile, ready to celebrate the breed we know and love. I am so thankful to be a part of the Hereford family and to have the opportunity to lead the next generation of our industry through this next year. **HW**



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