

Different but Still Family

Brooklyn Adam, Samuel Lawrence, Montana Lawrence and Abigail Spindle reflect on junior board service.

by *Grace Jacobson*

After a long day of working the showring at the 2021 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), the four retiring directors of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) junior board would only have a few more moments in their signature maroon jackets. Brooklyn Adam, Montana Lawrence, Samuel Lawrence and Abigail Spindle made the crowd teary-eyed with their retiring addresses. Then, they passed down their jackets to the four newly elected board members.

Found family

This three-year journey of the four retiring junior board members began in Grand Island, Neb., during the 2018 JNHE “All Aboard the Hereford Express.” These four come from across the nation — from Minnesota to Missouri and from Indiana to New Mexico.

All spoke about how the Hereford cattle community was not simply close-knit; it was family.

“When you’re with Hereford, you’re with family,” Montana says. “No



The retiring board members stand together at the end of awards night after passing on their maroon jackets.



Montana Lawrence and Brooklyn Adam help work the ring.

matter where you go, you still feel at home.”

Like all families, everyone has unique qualities they contribute. “We’re all incredibly different, but we mesh very, very well,” Abigail says. They shared memories about the phone calls and moments that strengthened their friendships.

“We’re all extremely different, but we all balance each other very well,” Montana says. “We all want to go with the flow, make sure everybody’s happy and keep everything in a relaxed place.”

Despite all the curveballs thrown

at them during their term, their time together was mostly free of frustration and argument.

All roads lead to Rome

All four had different paths to becoming NJHA board directors. Montana’s father was a junior board member. Abigail’s family has also been involved in Hereford leadership — both on the junior board and the American Hereford Association (AHA) Board. Brooklyn showed the first Hereford that her family owned. Samuel’s first time running for junior board came with defeat.

The four recalled their first trip to JNHE. Montana traveled to Madison for her first JNHE in 2016. A blown tire on her family’s truck made a rough start.

“We were literally stuck on the highway with our cattle, and there



Brooklyn Adam hands out American flags for the opening ceremony.

was just nothing we could do,” she says. “We weren’t super connected with other Minnesota Hereford kids at that point, but this family that we knew came and picked us up. When we pulled into Madison, the entire Minnesota group unloaded our whole trailer and got us all taken care of.”

Samuel’s first JNHE memory was his mother being scared by mice during the 2005 Milwaukee junior national. Abigail’s fond memories of her first JNHE are filled with free ice cream during the 2009 event in Tulsa, Okla.



Abigail Spindle hangs out with a young junior member during the first Pen-to-Pen mentorship session.

In 2008, Brooklyn’s inaugural trip to JNHE in Kansas City, Mo., was made memorable with the mentor-mentee (now Pen-to-Pen) program.

Previous junior directors, Taylor Belle Matheny and Hannah Williams, came to the Missouri state Hereford show and encouraged Brooklyn to run for the junior board. Abigail was inspired by seeing the junior board members in the annual NJHA calendar.

Samuel originally ran for the board in 2017. He thought of all those wearing the maroon jackets who helped him when he was younger, and wanted to be one himself.

“Those older kids would talk to and help me in the ring, and I set the goal to be one of those cool, big kids,” he says.

Samuel was encouraged by those around him to make a second campaign for junior board. “Looking back, it was a good thing I didn’t get on the board that year because I still needed to grow up a bit,” he says. “Then the biggest push to rerun was

the amount of people saying, ‘Hey, we need you.’”

Montana was hesitant to run for the board, but when it was her last year of eligibility, she took the leap of faith. She remembers the feeling of receiving her jacket.

“I remember sitting in my chair at the awards night, and I saw Mason



Samuel Lawrence chats with ringside spectators.

Blinson coming over to me and a switch flipped,” she says. “Once put in that position, your ability to impact people branches out so much.”

Despite their different journeys to becoming board members, they all said the most important part of wearing the maroon jacket was serving the junior members.

“It was a goal to serve,” Samuel says.

Now, they have spent the past three years serving together. All of them talked about hitting the slopes in Colorado — despite their lack of experience — along with a trip to GKB Cattle and other travels for Faces of Leadership that took them to places like San Francisco.

“When we went skiing in Denver, everybody was just a mess,” Brooklyn says. “People were falling, and somebody got lost on the Black Diamond.” Samuel says these times allowed the board to get to know each other on a deeper level than they could have at a cattle show.

Montana says the trip to GKB is when the board members became family to her. “We would stay up until midnight playing cards,” she says. “We played ‘ghosts in the graveyard’ like 12-year-old kids, and we made meals together.”

Lessons learned

The last three years encouraged growth, both personally and professionally.

Brooklyn, once scared to talk to strangers, now comfortably talks to anyone.

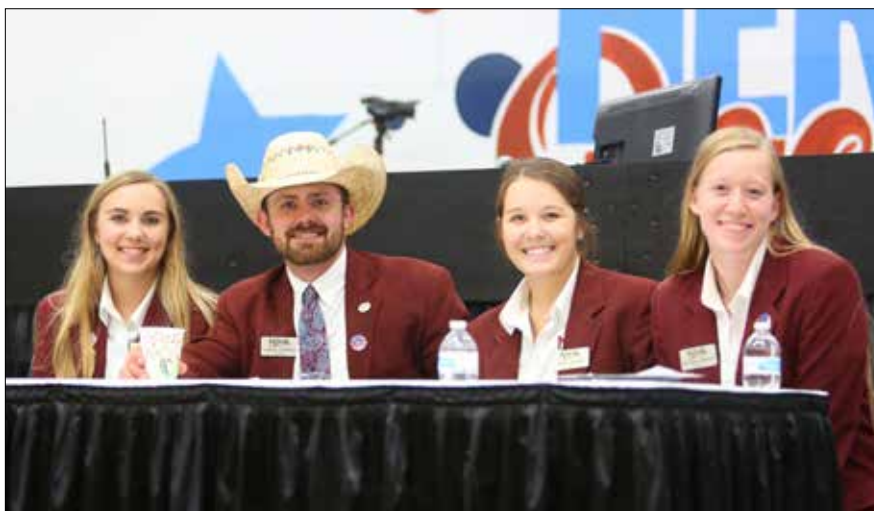
“I had to remind myself that it’s OK to do things that I’m uncomfortable with,” she says.

Others comment on how their perspective and understanding of leadership grew and sharpened. Being the chairman challenged Montana and redefined what it took to guide a group of leaders.

“What was most important to me was protecting my team and making sure that everybody was in a healthy, happy place where we could work together and be successful,” she says.

After three years of wearing the jacket, these young adults gained some wisdom for the next generation of potential directors.

Samuel’s perception on the signature maroon jacket changed throughout the years. “It’s not rainbows and sunshine all the time,” he says. “It’s not the miles



The “oldies” sit all together right before they make their retiring addresses at the 2021 Junior National Hereford Expo.



Abigail Spindle talks with steer and bred-and-owned judge, Mark Core.

walked in the ring, but the smiles on the kids’ faces.”

All the retiring directors think NJHA members should give it a shot and run for the board. “Kids should run because first of all, they can,” Montana says.

The people the junior board members met, coupled with their impact on young people, make the experience worthwhile. “Don’t be scared because you’re going to make a difference in somebody’s life. That is valuable, and that matters,” Montana says.

The practical application of what Abigail learned from her time on the board will guide her the rest of her life.

“We’re in college and being on the board teaches you how to correctly manage a lot of different responsibilities going on at the same time,” she says.

With all the lessons learned and wisdom passed to the next generation, Montana notes the greatest thing about her time serving was the importance of people.

“What I really discovered is that medals tarnish, buckles tarnish — all those things fade,” she says. “When you get to the end of an experience like this, the only thing you really take with you is the people that you met. That’s what ends up mattering.” **HW**



Samuel Lawrence ready in the ring to assist junior members.