

# Youth Movement | Keep it Real

by Noah Benedict

At the Faces of Leadership Conference, youth leadership motivational speaker, Aric Jackson, preceded each of his words of wisdom and teachings with, “Can I be real with you?” Sitting among the crowd, I couldn’t help but listen.

So, I’m here to be real with you. If our junior members aren’t involved in the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA), they are missing out. Whether they are your kids, grandkids, neighbors or friends, they are missing out on lifelong friendships, youth leadership positions and self-growth opportunities they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

During the final night of Faces of Leadership, I learned a lot about myself, too. To round out our conference, we hosted a dance for all the participants. The junior

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Noah Benedict, NJHA Chairman

board and all the participants danced the night away. At one point I looked out over the crowd and thought, these are my people. There was nowhere in the world I would have rather been than right there in that moment. I had goosebumps then, and I get goosebumps now just writing about it. I can’t put into words how at home I felt in that moment or the care that I had for every single junior member there.

## Dance like no one is watching

Prior to my time on the junior board, I didn’t dance at dances; instead, I stood in the corner. I was too scared to embarrass myself. But that night, I’m pretty sure I had several members of our junior board in tears, laughing at some of my newly invented dance moves. I thank the NJHA for this. Without getting involved with the junior board and making the most of the Faces of Leadership Conferences, I would be the kid in the corner, too scared to do anything.

Once the night was over, I was riding down an elevator with two other NJHA board members, and I blurted out, “I have no idea where I would be if I [had] never started showing Hereford cattle.” It may sound cliché, but it’s the truth.

Hereford cattle and the NJHA have shown me so much about who I am. They have brought me to some of my highest moments in life and helped me through some of my lowest. Showing cattle has allowed me to meet people I can count on no matter what. NJHA gave me the opportunity to serve as your chairman and opportunities to develop my character. It also fostered a love for the youth of our industry that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Hereford juniors: Don’t give too much energy to the word “scared.” I don’t know your struggles, and I don’t know what is keeping you from getting involved in all the NJHA has to offer — but as Aric Jackson said, don’t be scared. I want to challenge our junior members to attend the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) for the first time, compete in a contest, attend Faces of Leadership or just dance your heart out on the dance floor. I am fortunate to serve with 11 other elite individuals on this board who want to help you grow, and they will, if you let them.

Can I be real with you? If you don’t give the NJHA a chance to help you, you are going to miss out. **HW**



### Chairman

Noah Benedict, [nojo1132@gmail.com](mailto:nojo1132@gmail.com)

### Vice chairman

Wyatt Lawrence, [wytattherf99@gmail.com](mailto:wytattherf99@gmail.com)

### Communications chair

Bailey Morrell, [bsmshowcattle5@gmail.com](mailto:bsmshowcattle5@gmail.com)

### Fundraising chair

JW Cox, [jwcox2009@gmail.com](mailto:jwcox2009@gmail.com)

### Leadership chair

Lauren McMillan, [laurentmcmillan@gmail.com](mailto:laurentmcmillan@gmail.com)

### Membership chair

Libby Rushton, [libbyrushton2001@gmail.com](mailto:libbyrushton2001@gmail.com)

### Directors

Luke Daniels, [luke@circleh.info](mailto:luke@circleh.info)

Wesley Denton, [dentonw@ksu.edu](mailto:dentonw@ksu.edu)

Lauren Jones, [ljherefords15@gmail.com](mailto:ljherefords15@gmail.com)

Hannah Pearson, [hjpearson001@gmail.com](mailto:hjpearson001@gmail.com)

Ralston Ripp, [ralstonripp@gmail.com](mailto:ralstonripp@gmail.com)

Tar Tut, [tartut88@yahoo.com](mailto:tartut88@yahoo.com)

### Director of youth activities

Amy Cowan

816-842-3757, [acowan@hereford.org](mailto:acowan@hereford.org)

[JrHereford.org](http://JrHereford.org)