

Youth Movement | The People You Meet

At Home in Maroon

by *Noah Benedict*

Wearing the maroon jacket has been one of the best and most influential experiences of my life. The places traveled, goals accomplished and friends made have meant the world to me. However, as I reflected on my time with the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA), I realized I have grown more from this experience than I ever expected.

In Denver, Colo., during the 2019 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), I was running for the board. I worked hard to put my best foot forward. I tried to look sharp, give a great speech and meet everyone in the barn. But, secretly, I was terrified. My freshman year

of college, quite frankly, I struggled. That first year of school was very different than I had expected, and I was lost, searching for something to provide me with some sort of direction or purpose.

God opened a door for me that summer, and all I had to do was push past my fear. The opportunity to impact an organization, which had impacted me, was exactly what I needed to find direction in my life. From an outside perspective, the NJHA board works to create opportunities for its members through programs like the JNHE, Faces of Leadership and recently BOLD. While this remains true, the impact and opportunities this board has provided me are far greater than I ever imagined.

A network of opportunities

From first donning that maroon jacket, my number of connections doubled. My network has only continued to grow over these past three years of leadership, and it helped me land my career. Leadership conferences, state shows, national shows and sales all allowed me to bond with other NJHA members and meet industry leaders. These opportunities gave me the chance to travel to a new business, farm or ranch and meet the people behind them.

In 2019, I was not prepared for the journey that would lie before me. I knew I wanted to be a part of this organization and mentor as many young people as I could, but the bonds, relationships and passion that board members develop for the other NJHA members cannot be described. I watched firsthand as juniors improved themselves because of



Noah Benedict, retiring NJHA Chairman

things our board implemented and executed, traveled to states for Hereford Homeroom, put on Faces of Leadership and was part of the first NJHA board to make a new conference like BOLD a success. I built relationships with these members, and those are memories that will last a lifetime. I hope at least a few of those think the same about their experiences with me.

As I conclude, I just want to say thank you to all of Team Hereford. It takes a village to pull off what we see on the surface, and every member, parent and breeder has played a part in it along the way. All of the board members I have worked with over the last three years have been nothing short of remarkable. They each left an individual memory in my mind. They have built the foundation for Amy, Bailey, Chloé and the coming board members to really shine. Be excited about being part of the NJHA; you never know where it may take you. Thank you for allowing me to find my home within the maroon jacket.



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The Dream

by Wyatt Lawrence

It is hard to believe that three years serving on the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board have gone so fast. It feels like just yesterday that my family was loading up to travel to Denver, Colo., for the 2019 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). That JNHE was special to me, as I was filled with anticipation, excitement and nerves.

I didn't know what to expect running for the NJHA, and I had even less of an idea what to expect if I was elected. Looking back, I can say I have been truly blessed, and I am filled with gratitude. I have been honored to serve on the NJHA board. I believe serving as an NJHA director is one of the most prestigious leadership opportunities available for young people in the agricultural industry. From the endless line of supporters to energized juniors, very few things in my life have helped me grow like the NJHA.

Some of my fondest memories are of time spent with my team. Traveling the country together has been a blast. We have seen some world-class operations, trained with leadership professionals and built friendships. It has been interesting to foster close friendships through the NJHA board. Our team brought a great number of skills to the table and offered a lot of ideas. By working together, we have been able to accomplish some great things over the last three years.

Passion for people

Truly, when I reflect on what the NJHA board has given me, I am overwhelmed. The best way I can put it is that for the last three years I have lived a dream. I met new people, saw new things and worked within the Hereford breed. I loved every minute of hosting JNHEs and leading conferences. Yes, this role took time and commitment, but it was totally worth the experience.



Wyatt Lawrence, retiring NJHA Vice Chairman

I started this journey with the campaign slogan of, "Love for Cattle; Passion for People," and this has been reaffirmed to me over and over again through the NJHA. Yes, I saw lots of cattle and ranches, but what made this experience special was the people. My teammates were the ones who made it feel like family. The ranchers were the ones who shared wisdom. The juniors were the ones who brought joy to every moment.

People are what make the difference in our everyday life, especially people who choose to be selfless and place others before themselves. These people make a difference in lives. We love Hereford cattle, and that is the reason that we come together. We gather to celebrate our genetics,

compete and test our skills, but the people are why we come back. The people are why we get nervous, why we get anxious, why we get excited and why we feel grateful.

While setting up for JNHE, I have stood in the empty barn — no fans or blowers making noise, no cattle or stall displays. I simply stood in an empty building full of bedding. What changes that building is when the families arrive, and the barn is filled with people. That is when the barn comes alive.

This year at JNHE take a moment and look around the barn in the early hours of the morning or late at night and be reminded that it's the people — the people make the Hereford breed special. To me, the people have been the greatest blessing. **HW**