

# AN EXCELLENT RIDE

Retiring NJHA board members pass along their maroon jackets.

by **Payton Paschoal**

**T**hey have seen it all — Bailey Morrell, Noah Benedict, Luke Daniels and Wyatt Lawrence.

These retiring members of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors were elected and pledged their service in Denver, Colo., at the 2019 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). That was just months before COVID-19 shuttered much of the nation and the world. Given the ensuing challenges, they shared their feelings of reward and relief after organizing events during a global pandemic.

Adverse conditions forged a strong bond between the then-new board members and the rest of the leadership team.

“Whatever problem we ran into along the way, I always found myself with a group of people that, just based on our common interests, were able to work through anything,” Daniels says.

Unique obstacles also enabled individual growth opportunities for these board members. They shared some of their experiences in their retiring addresses.



Retiring NJHA board members (l to r) Noah Benedict, Wyatt Lawrence, Luke Daniels and Bailey Morrell receive a bronze Hereford bull in recognition of their dedicated commitment.

## Personal growth

Bailey Morrell was the first NJHA board member elected from the California-Nevada Junior Hereford Association in more than 20 years. During her candidacy, Morrell

remembers, “Not a lot of people knew me going into the week I ran, so that week was about getting to know people, everyone from age 7-22; I wanted to get to know you.” Since then, she has created her own Hereford family from across the country.

When Morrell first slipped on the maroon jacket, she assumed the responsibility of the role, but also the history. She explains

the maroon jacket means something to the breed, and it holds a lot of memories for those who came before her. She smiled and recalled the number of shows the jacket has seen and kids it has hugged.

“I am not the same person I was when I walked into Denver,” Morrell says. “I attribute a lot of my confidence to the NJHA.”

Representing young people involved with the Hereford breed is a rare opportunity. Through serving, Morrell explains she grew personally and evolved as a Hereford advocate. She describes herself as a genuine but focused person.

Morrell’s retiring address focused on the chapters of life, but she reminded the audience, “There is no timeline that can tell me it’s the end of my Hereford career, as this breed will be a part of my family and me throughout my life.”



Luke Daniels is all smiles while unloading trailers on day one of JNHE.



Wyatt Lawrence's excitement was real during opening ceremonies.

### Starting fresh

Although he doesn't have deep roots in the Hereford breed, Luke Daniels says he has officially anchored himself to the red-and-white cattle. Service to the NJHA members stretches beyond interacting with them at junior events, according to Daniels. One of his favorite memories is attending the American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Mo., where he was able to connect with breeders and industry leaders.

"The beginning of our adulthood is serving these juniors," Daniels says

with pride. The responsibility bestowed upon him provided a platform to continue growing his love for the breed and the youth. The word Daniels consistently used to describe the feeling of retirement was, "Humbled." He spent his term as a director serving the youth while growing as an individual. And he cannot be more thankful for the opportunity.

As a first-generation Hereford producer, Daniels says he is grateful for the people of the Hereford breed.

"They are unlike any other," he explains. "They humbly bring you into the great practice of producing Hereford cattle."

Daniels credits his success to the support of his Hereford family, especially from his home state of Texas. A handful of prominent breeders within an hour radius of Daniels encouraged him to invest in Herefords, and he has never looked back.

After three years of service, Daniels wants the juniors to know that he is just as thankful and humbled for the opportunity and the trust instilled in him as he was the night he received his jacket.

Daniels is excited about the future of the breed.

"I speak beyond this week to say that Hereford cattle will make a difference in our country," he says.

### One mouth, two ears

Wyatt Lawrence learned the meaning of the phrase, "There is more to be



Noah Benedict assists groups of juniors in the second Pen-to-Pen session.

caught than taught," during his term and advises NJHA members do the same. No matter the challenge, he says the NJHA board's success stemmed from strong, independent leaders working together.

While the breed's long history and growing popularity speaks for themselves, Lawrence believes people are the reason Hereford has withstood the test of time. The care and investment Lawrence pledged to the youth of the NJHA is apparent through his desire for Hereford youth to "achieve joy."

Lawrence, the retiring vice chairman, said the breed's future is bright because of youth who are purpose-driven and talented.

"I think that today it's hard to just get people to come up with a dream," he says.

But, he believes that the Hereford breed is full of not only dreamers, but those willing to put in the effort to achieve them. His pride and excitement for Hereford juniors make him a lifelong advocate.



Bailey Morrell gives her retiring address.

“I pursued this opportunity with as much honesty, integrity and love as I possibly could, and I promise if you use those three things in whatever opportunity you choose to pursue, whether it be here or in something else in your life, you will find success.”

— **Noah Benedict**



Noah Benedict and Jack Ward, AHA executive vice president, work together to line up classes before entering the showring.



Bailey Morrell hugs her family before passing on her maroon jacket to the next director.

Lawrence is always looking ahead. Thinking about the end of his term on the board, he says gratitude is the most prominent feeling because he can give the honor of serving the association to another.

“It’s been an excellent ride,” Lawrence told his teammates in his final comments, commending them for their service and all they taught him.

**Lifelong service**

The feeling of retiring from the NJHA board is similar to the feeling of being elected to the board, Noah Benedict says. He divides the service

term into three years: “The first year, you learn to listen. The next year is when you get to start brainstorming ideas, and the final year is all about leadership.”

As chairman of the board, Benedict pledged himself to serving his fellow board members to help fulfill their ideas. Benedict was thankful to be able to help carry out the dreams of current and past directors. Some of Benedict’s proudest moments were seeing the BOLD Conference develop from an idea into the annual conference it is today, as well as hosting the NJHA podcast for members.

Opportunity was the theme of Benedict’s retiring address. While he thought his position was simply an opportunity to help the membership, he explained it provided him the space to grow as an individual.

“Beyond being an honor, serving as a role model for the Hereford youth was inspiring and experiential,” Benedict says.

This spring, before his NJHA membership and board service ended, Benedict joined the AHA field staff to represent the Hereford breed. He says he will always carry the Hereford youth with him. Benedict commends

the new NJHA leadership and reminds junior members, “The NJHA provides opportunities. This jacket was an opportunity of mine, but there are plenty of other opportunities out there.”

The past three years have been an unforgettable time in the retiring board member’s lives. Their service to the Hereford breed and its youth was recognized by a grateful audience and a legacy they are confident the new NJHA leadership will carry out. **HW**



Luke Daniels speaks with fellow juniors at Sunday’s delegate roundtable and ice cream social.



The Lawrence siblings embrace after Wyatt Lawrence’s retiring address.