

NATIONAL HEREFORD WOMAN OF THE YEAR: IT'S UP TO YOU

DONNA CURRY RECOGNIZED AS THE NATIONAL HEREFORD WOMAN OF THE YEAR.



by *Katie Maupin Miller*

The people that leave the largest legacies often jump in with both feet, so to speak. That was certainly the case with Donna Curry of McAlester, Okla. Oklahoma Hereford Association president and dear friend, Rindy Bacon, recalls Donna doing just that — hopping the showing rail to join the adult showmanship class. Hair pulled into pig tails, jeans tucked haphazardly in muck boots and a plush cow tucked under one arm, Donna made quite the entrance that day. Peals of laughter followed her as she joined the more serious competitors with her stuffed entry to raise money for Oklahoma Herefords.

Even when she made subtler entrances, Donna was hardly missed in a room. Pure positivity and exuberance radiated from her. As Susan Gebhart says, “Donna was effervescent.”

“When she walked into a room, you instantly knew she was there. She was so outgoing and so positive. You never

saw her without a smile, and that smile was genuine,” Rindy says. “She was just happy to see you and happy to be there.”

Susan says her nearly radical positivity was built through her deep faith. At her core, Donna always had faith that everything would work out for the best. Yet, that didn’t stop her from doing everything she could to help the higher power make this world a better place. As Donna often said, “Make it a great day, or not. That choice is yours.” As expected, she always chose the former.

Sadly, Donna passed unexpectedly in June 2022. Her saying is now printed on shirts worn by young people whose lives she impacted across Oklahoma, and there is a lot of them. Although Donna has roots in the Hereford breed, her service wasn’t limited to bald-faced enthusiasts. She counseled young people through her role at Frink-Chambers School, guided 4-H members as a state and nationally recognized leader and

even found ways to help less fortunate youth in her hometown. Her legacy of service and giving continues inside the Hereford breed and out. This winter, Donna’s past student and 4-H member, will once again collect new socks, undergarments, pajamas, hats and gloves for children in need for his service 4-H project, which she encouraged him to start.

Within Hereford circles, Donna was well known for her involvement on the state and national levels. She served on the National Hereford Women’s (NHW) board when the previous women’s organizations merged, helping create a unified foundation for today’s leaders.

“She stepped up, and she did whatever it took to support the Association, its juniors and the National Hereford Women,” says Kathy Buchholz, GKB Cattle.

Donna’s leadership was often by example. If she committed to helping, you could consider it done. She never shied away from rolling up her sleeves and was known for her fundraising prowess for causes she believed in.

“She was the epitome of somebody that just believed in people and wanted to build people up,” says Shannon Worrell, NHW ex officio. “If there was a need, Donna would help figure it out. If you had a dream, Donna was the person to help you find a way.”

Donna was often found in the barn at Hereford shows and sales, supporting her family and their operation, Curry Herefords. Donna and her husband of more than 30 years, Curtis, raised their children, Cameron and Staci, in the industry. And seldom was she seen recently without one of her three grandchildren — Maddix and



Donna Curry’s family accepted the NHW Woman of the Year award. Pictured (l to r) are: Donna’s husband, Curtis Curry; NHW president, Briley Miller; NHW ex officio, Shannon Worrell; daughter, Staci Thomsen; and NHW president-elect, Sally Wingler.

Maisyn Thomsen, and Eliza Curry — on her hip. She was the quintessential Hereford show mom. She cared deeply for her family. They worked together to care for their cattle, and the Curry family always had faith that the Lord would care for them.

“Live each day to the fullest is what she’d tell you to do,” Rindy says. “God first, family and then those cattle.”

Donna was chosen for the National Hereford Woman of the Year as she spent many years modeling the traits the organization strives to uphold — an open heart, an open mind and a passion to succeed.

“Donna was a long-time friend and fellow Oklahoma Hereford mom. We spent many a day on the barn aisle at state and national shows where Donna was always the embodiment of a kind, caring, friendly, hard-working and enthusiastic Hereford woman. In short, everything NHW honors with this award. She was quick to support junior programs in general and individual

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junior members who needed guidance, a helping hand or a pat on the back,” penned Susan in her letter nominating Donna for the award.

Donna’s legacy will not only live on through the countless lives she touched through her tireless service, but also through the Donna Curry

Memorial Scholarship Endowment with the Hereford Youth Foundation of America. More than \$100,000 was raised in an online auction held July 19 to support the cause. As NHW president-elect Sally Wingle notes, Donna’s unwavering support for the industry’s young people and her passion for the junior program are core parts of NHW’s mission, and she’s confident Donna will be proud to see women continue to support young people. To contribute to Donna’s legacy and support the industry’s young people through this endowment, visit: HerefordYouthFoundation.org/how-to-give/give-now/.

“Donna’s contagious smile, laugh and loving heart will be missed for years to come,” says Amy Cowan, American Hereford Association director of youth activities and foundation. “Her dedication to the youth was unmatched, and she has left an impact that will last for generations.” **NHW**