

Honoring the Vanier Legacy

In 2008, the late Jack and Donna Vanier of CK Ranch, Brookville, Kan., established the Vanier Family Scholarship Program through the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA). This fall, HYFA will proudly carry on Jack and Donna's legacy by awarding 10 scholarships in the Vanier family's name. Thanks to the Vanier family's philanthropy over the years, upwards of \$750,000 has been awarded to more than 70 National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members.

Jack passed away Feb. 10. He was a pillar of the Hereford breed and instrumental in the creation of a firm foundation for young people in the Hereford breed. The Vanier family name and HYFA are synonymous with supporting Hereford youth, and over his lifetime, Jack humbly gave so much to so many. HYFA is built on the pillars of scholarship, leadership, research and education, and we are so grateful to Jack and Donna Vanier and all they have given as they helped pave the way for youth in agriculture through scholarship and education.

Jack's family said it best in his obituary: "His contributions to agriculture, the livestock industry, to Kansas State University and to all the organizations and people he touched are many and significant. But it was by living his life the way he did that marks the profound contribution Jack Vanier made to our greater society, the rural culture and a way of life worth preserving that will stand out. He was a patriarch, touching many lives through scholarship, mentorship and stewardship and for that, we will miss him as we continue to carry out the legacy that he laid."

The following is a testament to the Vanier family's legacy as we hear from past scholarship winners, and how these generous



Jack and Donna Vanier were dedicated to HYFA and the NJHA. In 2005 they were recognized as honorary members of the NJHA.

scholarships made a difference in their college and career paths.

Austin Cook, financial analyst, Stephens Inc.

"My parents are a first-generation Hereford family. My involvement in 4-H and then FFA was enhanced by leadership and other skill development opportunities provided for me through the NJHA. When I say we started this journey with used T-posts and a 20-year-old squeeze chute, I'm not exaggerating. If I've learned anything from these experiences, it's that very few of us can get by without the generosity and assistance provided by someone else. The \$10,000 scholarship provided by the Vanier family was a game-changer for my family and me. Because of my love of Hereford cattle and my degree in agricultural economics, I will always be involved in raising Hereford cattle. Today, I'm a financial analyst for Stephens Inc., an investment firm based out of Little Rock, Ark., and I continue to grow my own herd, using the knowledge attained while in college and through

valuable hands-on experiences. The generosity of the Vanier family was extremely humbling for me. I'm extremely grateful for their generosity."

Dixie Miller, agricultural teacher, Pea Ridge High School

"I am forever grateful for the Vanier family and their contributions to my education. Receiving Vanier Family Scholarships through HYFA alleviated the financial burden from mine and my family's shoulders and allowed

me to continue my education and pursue a career in agriculture. I am now an agricultural teacher at Pea Ridge Schools in Arkansas, where I strive to cultivate talent within my students and provide educational experiences and opportunities. HYFA and the Vanier family opened a door of possibilities for me and have provided many blessings to others as well. My goal as an agricultural teacher is to pay it forward as much as I can."

Noah Benedict, upper Midwest region field representative, American Hereford Association

"I never had the good fortune of knowing Jack and Donna Vanier very well, but it was easy to see what they stood for through their work with the NJHA and HYFA. To have the Vanier family be so generous to members of the NJHA was exciting year after year. As a scholarship recipient, the Vanier family provided me so much freedom. This scholarship gave me the freedom to be able to join whatever campus organization I wanted, be a member of the

NJHA board of directors and so many other great opportunities, not to mention the prestige of the scholarship and what it means on a confidence level to be selected as a recipient. To be able to receive that scholarship reminded me that what I was trying to accomplish was worthwhile and other people took recognition as well.

"I also got to look at the Vanier Family Scholarship through the lens of a past NJHA chairman. As I stood up in front of the membership at the American Hereford Association Annual Meeting to help Amy Cowan announce the Vanier Family Scholarship recipients, I couldn't help but be happy. Seeing 10 young people push themselves and put themselves in a spot to be selected was the definition of what the scholarship embodied. It rewarded NJHA members who were diligently becoming the most successful versions of themselves. I want to say thank you to Jack and the entire Vanier family for all that they have done for Team Hereford. They made a tremendous impact on my life and so many other NJHA members through their unmatched generosity."

Kelsey Stimpson Gibson, English teacher, Brookhaven High School

"I vividly remember touring Kansas State University one summer on our way to the Junior National Hereford Expo, which was held in Kansas City that year. I was only in sixth grade, but I knew then that I was determined to attend a midwestern college. Years went by and as college grew near, a stormy cloud of anxiety quickly cast through my mind as I began to think of the daunting cost of college. I was raised by a single mother who worked as a teacher. As a teacher myself, I know firsthand that no person gets into education to become rich. I quickly realized that I could not burden my mother with a hefty tuition bill, and that paying for college was going to be my own responsibility.

"As a two-time recipient of the Vanier Family Scholarship,

I can attest to how influential those funds were in my college career and adult life. Although my primary career path doesn't directly involve agriculture, Vanier Family Scholarships helped to pave a way so that I could continue to grow and expand on my cattle herd directly following graduation. Graduating college with no student debt allowed my husband and I to immediately start investing our extra funds into our cattle operation. As we now have two children, Kolyer and Riggins, we feel grateful that we have been able to establish a small purebred Hereford herd in hopes that they will love this breed as much as I have. My dream growing up was to continue the Hereford legacy for my children, and the Vanier family played a large role in allowing my husband and I to do just that.

"The Vanier family has made an everlasting impact on my life and countless lives of Hereford youth across the country. Their support and generosity allowed me to graduate college debt-free. As the world's population continues to rise at a rapid rate, the support for agriculture decreases. Supporting youth in agriculture is as vital as ever before. The Vanier family understands and appreciates the need for agriculture and the Hereford breed. It is a true honor that this family places such a high regard and trust in the youth of tomorrow. The Vanier family has left a lasting imprint on my life and the lives of many others. For that, I will be forever grateful."

Bryden Barber, student, Oklahoma State University

"The Hereford breed is so lucky to have such outstanding support from sponsors, and especially the Vanier family. Through the Vanier family's generosity year in and year out, so many opportunities have been created for so many kids over the last several years to follow their dreams and accomplish their goals. I know firsthand that I would not be in the position I am currently in

if it weren't for the Vanier family. To give out a \$10,000 scholarship is incredible, and to give out 10 scholarships annually just shows how much faith they have in us juniors to go above and beyond. I am forever indebted to the Vanier family and cannot thank them enough."

Briana Katzenberger, trade show and channel marketing coordinator, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

"I am a third-generation Hereford breeder. I was a member of the Wisconsin Junior Hereford Association for 13 years and am a current member of the Wisconsin Hereford Association. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin La Crosse in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in marketing and a goal to work in agricultural marketing. From people to soil, the agriculture community is built on hard work and passion, and I wanted to help show that to the world, wherever I ended up. I remember receiving the email that I had been selected as a recipient of the Vanier Family Scholarship as I was on my way to class in the fall of 2016. I stopped in the middle of campus to immediately call my family to share the exciting news. I cried tears of joy because I was honored to have been selected among my peers for this prestigious scholarship. At the time, I was working three jobs to support myself and pay for my schooling on top of attending classes and taking care of my animals. The Vanier family changed my life with this scholarship by giving me the financial freedom I needed to get the most out of my education and reach my goals. I am currently working for the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, sharing the passion behind America's Dairyland across the United States, and I couldn't have made it without the Vanier family. Thank you for your continued support of Hereford youth following their dreams." **HW**

Amy Cowan is the American Hereford Association director of youth activities and foundation.