

Youth Movement | Just Try

by **Sam Birdsall**

“Show Me the Herefords” was the tagline for the 2013 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Kansas City, Mo. That was the first time I decided to “show myself,” both inside the ring and out. At 8 years old, I wasn’t the most excited junior while practicing my illustrated speech. Looking back, though, I am happy my parents pushed me to do something new and out of my comfort zone. As we prepare for 2024, the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) continues to expand with new opportunities for junior members to develop leadership skills. With so many opportunities, every member has a different outlet to get involved in NJHA.



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Our association hosts two major leadership conferences throughout the year, Faces of Leadership and the BOLD Conference. Faces of Leadership follows JNHE every summer and is tailored to junior members ages 14-21. Each year I attend, I walk away with fresh ideas. I’m excited for the 2024 Faces of Leadership in Fort Worth, Texas. BOLD is held each spring at GKB Cattle’s Hi Point Ranch in Desdemona, Texas. This elite leadership event is for those ages 18-21 who are looking to further develop the skills learned at Faces of Leadership and dive deeper into their personal leadership journey.

Next, let’s talk about the NJHA Fed Steer Shootout, a program spanning almost 12 months. Entries are due Nov. 1 each year. In December, contestants send steers to HRC Feed Yards in Scott City, Kan. While their cattle are on feed, juniors learn about the cattle feeding industry and the beef supply chain from educational opportunities and resources provided by the association. Exceptional contestants in both the cattle performance and educational portions of the Fed Steer Shootout are recognized the following fall during the American Hereford Association Annual Meeting and Educational Forum.

Finally, the highlight of many juniors’ summer is the JNHE. Throughout the week, NJHA members compete in contests and network with our industry’s most respected professionals while seeing friends and making new connections with juniors from across the country. Some of my favorite contests are sales academy, illustrated speech and Hereford bowl, just to name a few. The NJHA board of directors



Sam Birdsall, NJHA director

works hard each year, hosting the Pen-to-Pen program, pairing up younger members with more experienced ones in a unique mentorship experience. There is also Bridging the Gap, which encourages high school and college-age NJHA members to connect with universities and companies around the country while learning about educational programs, internships and career opportunities.

The NJHA offers an array of programs and contests for members to enjoy. Personally, I am glad I have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the association, and I would love to see many of our members commit to trying at least one new thing this year. Simply try; that’s all it could take to make a difference. If you have any questions on how to get involved, visit Hereford.org/youth. **HW**