

by Harlee Watson

Confidence, Community and Connection

Confidence. Community. Connection. The National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) focused on leadership during events stretching from Hereford Homeroom sessions at state and regional shows to the Faces of Leadership Conference.

To wrap up the year, the NJHA board of directors held the first NJHA Meet-Up: Building on Confidence, Community and Connection, in conjunction with the American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting and Educational Forum in Kansas City, Mo. All NJHA members were encouraged to attend, whether

exhibiting at the American Royal or attending the Annual Meeting. This event was a success and beneficial for all in attendance.

While attending the Meet-Up, members made new friends, learned line dances and wrote to the pen pals they met at the Pen-to-Pen event at the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo.

Activities illustrated the importance of the event's theme: Confidence, Community and Connection. Connections were made during games of Connect 4 and Jenga that included questions to open conversations between players. Participants built their confidence during a dancing workshop taught by NJHA directors, which encouraged members to get out of their shell and provided fun skills for the future. Attendees created friendship bracelets to celebrate community while making a stop at the Pen-to-Pen writing station.

Junior member Josie Mares from Wyoming has been showing Hereford cattle for two years. Mares says, "I really enjoyed the Meet-Up and getting to know someone new, as well as interacting with some of the NJHA board members. I think it's a great thing to continue doing to allow junior members to make new connections with one another and get to know the junior board."

Kendall Boatman from Illinois is a sixth-generation Hereford breeder.



Harlee Watson, NJHA director.

"Through the opportunity at the NJHA Meet-Up, I was able to meet junior member Ella Weldon from Oklahoma," Boatman says. "We ended up being stalled beside each other at the American Royal, so by the end of the week we were great friends."

"It is important that younger kids have the opportunity to make connections with older kids."

— Kendall Boatman

Junior members like Boatman and Mares soaked up all the fun at the NJHA Meet-Up and were able to make new friends of all ages.

"It is important that younger kids have the

opportunity to make connections with older kids," Boatman says.

Mares adds, "Getting to interact with members of all ages made it all the more fun."

The NJHA Meet-Up is an event that the NJHA board of directors hopes to continue in the future and build upon for years to come. **HW**



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