

Chosen to **LEAD**

New NJHA directors don the revered maroon jacket.

International Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members elected four new leaders to serve on the NJHA board of directors. New and retiring directors were recognized during the emotional maroon jacket ceremony July 13 at the 2023 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE).

Sam Birdsall, Torrington, Wyo.; Lauren Gatz, Fairview, Kan.; Salem Sifford, Goldvein, Va.; and Harlee Watson, Flemingsburg, Ky., were elected to the NJHA board by junior Hereford association voting state delegates.

Retiring board members are immediate past chairman JW Cox, Flemingsburg, Ky.; retiring vice chairman Ralston Ripp, Kearney, Neb.; retiring communications chair Libby Rushton, Waverly, Tenn.; and retiring membership chair Lauren McMillan, Tiskilwa, Ill.

The NJHA board consists of 12 directors who fulfill a three-year term serving more than 4,000 members.

In addition to the new directors, the 2023-24 officer team includes chairman Tar Tut, Faribault, Minn.; vice chairman Wesley Denton, Blue Rapids, Kan.; communications chair Lauren Jones, Darlington, Wis.; membership chair Logan McFtridge, Otterbein, Ind.; fundraising chair Haley Mouser, Tenstrike, Minn.; leadership chair Hannah Pearson, Oconto, Neb.; and directors Kaylee McInvale, Cumby, Texas; and Isaac Rhode, Stewartville, Mo.

Newly elected directors

Sam Birdsall, Torrington, Wyo., is the 18-year-old son of Dennis and Heather Birdsall. He is a freshman at Kansas State University (K-State) majoring in agricultural economics with plans to pursue a career in agricultural financing.



Sam

Birdsall has been active in the Wyoming Junior Hereford Association for four years and served as its president since 2021. He strives to be an asset to the future of the Hereford breed and the cattle industry, utilizing his innovation and drive for improvement and efficiency. As a director, Birdsall plans to do everything he can to offer NJHA members an example of someone who strives to achieve his dreams and goals.

Lauren Gatz, Fairview, Kan., is the 20-year-old daughter of Taylor and Jennifer Gatz, and a 13-year member of the Kansas Junior Hereford Association. She is a junior at K-State and is majoring in agricultural communications and journalism. Her goal is to become a marketing specialist for a livestock breed association.



Lauren

As a director, Gatz is committed to promoting growth, fostering a sense of community and upholding the legacy of excellence within the NJHA. She has an active history in the Hereford breed, serving as the Kansas Hereford Princess and Queen and the National Hereford Queen, as well as participating in JNHE contests. She won the future professionals contest twice. Gatz will utilize her skill set, servant leadership and willingness to help others to improve and serve the NJHA.

Salem Sifford, Goldvein, Va., is the 19-year-old daughter of Stephen and Rosemary Sifford. She is a five-year member of the Virginia Junior Hereford Association and previous seven-year member of the North Carolina Junior Hereford Association. Sifford is a sophomore at Virginia Tech, majoring in dairy science with a dual emphasis on agricultural economics. Her career goals are working in the agricultural credit and finance sector while maintaining her family's operations.



Salem

Sifford hopes to serve as another voice for all states and all juniors. Her goal is to bring joy to each junior and his or her family involved in the association. Sifford has been the Virginia outstanding state junior member, featured as an



Sam Birdsall, the final director of the night to receive a maroon jacket, puts on the jacket passed from retiring chairman JW Cox.



Lauren Gatz dons her maroon jacket from former vice chairman, Ralston Ripp.



Libby Rushton passes on her maroon jacket to **Salem Sifford**.



Front row (l to r): Hannah Pearson, Oconto, Neb.; Salem Sifford, Goldvein, Va.; Haley Mouser, Tenstrike, Minn.; Harlee Watson, Flemingsburg, Ky.; Lauren Jones, Darlington, Wis.; Lauren Gatz, Fairview, Kan.; and Kaylee McInvale, Cumby, Texas. Back row (l to r): Wesley Denton, Blue Rapids, Kan.; Sam Birdsall, Torrington, Wyo.; Tar Tut, Faribault, Minn.; Logan McFatrige, Otterbein, Ind.; and Isaac Rhode, Stewartville, Mo.

NJHA Highlight and attended the BOLD Conference. She plans to use her enthusiasm for Hereford cattle, interest in helping others and leadership qualities to support the team.

Harlee Watson, Flemingsburg, Ky., is the 18-year-old daughter of Matt and Melinda Watson and an 11-year member of the Kentucky Junior Hereford Association (KJHA). She is a senior at Fleming County High School and plans to attend Butler Community College to continue her education after high school. Her long-term goals are attending funeral director school and owning her own funeral home.



Harlee

Watson wants to make a difference and be a mentor, friend and someone NJHA members look up to. She hopes to make a positive impact on the NJHA and the Hereford breed. She has served on the KJHA board of directors and the Kentucky Junior Cattlemen's Association.

Standing directors

Tar Tut is the 21-year-old son of Pock and Nyamark Tut. He is a recent graduate of Texas A&M University (TAMU), where he majored in agricultural communications and journalism with an emphasis in sales and marketing. Prior to TAMU, Tar was a member of the highly competitive livestock judging team — 2020-21 Team of the Year — at Butler Community College, where he graduated with an associate degree in animal science. He was a member of the TAMU 2022 reserve national champion livestock judging team and was named one of 10 to the collegiate coaches All-American Team, Saddle & Sirloin Club. He is an assistant coach for the Coryell County 4-H livestock judging team.

Tar was a member of the Minnesota Junior Hereford Association for six years. He strives to be someone the youth of his state can look up to, encouraging them to be leaders for the next generation. He is humbled to serve an association as great as the NJHA.

His goal is to be a leader of integrity, so that the values and traditions of the Hereford breed can be instilled into the hard-working juniors of the future. Tar encourages Hereford juniors and exhibitors to have proud days, not perfect days.

Wesley Denton is the 21-year-old son of John and Angie Denton. A senior at K-State, he is majoring in animal sciences and industry with an option in production. Denton's K-State activities include the Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity, Block and Bridle Club, Collegiate Cattlemen's Club and the K-State Purebred Beef Unit. He helped found the Alpha Gamma Royal Preview Show and served as chairman for two years. After college, he hopes to work as a cattle buyer, while continuing to grow his herd of Hereford cattle.

Denton is a 14-year member of the Kansas Junior Hereford Association and has served on its board for the past five years. Since his first JNHE 14 years ago, Denton has admired the NJHA board of directors and looked to them as influential leaders and role models.

"For as long I can remember, I have had the goal to someday become an NJHA director and strive to be like the leaders who helped shape my experience in the NJHA," he says.



Harlee Watson reacts to receiving the maroon jacket from Lauren McMillan.

Denton hopes he can have that same impact on other juniors as an NJHA director.

Lauren Jones is the 20-year-old daughter of B.J. and Kim Jones. She is a junior at Oklahoma State University (OSU) double majoring in animal science and agricultural communications. At OSU, she is a member of Block and Bridle and the Sigma Alpha Professional Agricultural Sorority, where she serves as the first vice president. Her career goals include continuing to serve the agricultural industry.

Jones has been an active member of the Wisconsin Junior Hereford Association for 13 years, where she has filled numerous leadership roles. Her goal on the junior board is to share her excitement for the Hereford breed by inspiring others to work together and advocate for agriculture and the beef industry. She is committed to helping younger members recognize their gifts and share those talents with their Hereford family, as well as nurturing their growth into leaders. Jones strives to serve NJHA members with as much knowledge, integrity and enthusiasm as she can and make the world a better, more inclusive place.

Logan McFatrige is the 20-year-old son of Robert and Kristie McFatrige. He is a junior at Purdue University, studying agribusiness. McFatrige is involved with the FarmHouse Fraternity and Block and Bridle Club at Purdue. His goals include a career in agricultural sales and marketing, as well as taking over his family's herd of purebred Hereford cattle. He interned at Bayer Crop Science this summer as a technology development field assistant, helping with research.

McFatrige has been an active member of the Indiana Junior Hereford Association, JNHE attendee and NJHA contest participant since 2010. He has held a leadership position in his state organization for four years and has been honored at the JNHE with first place finishes in the Hereford bowl and sales competitions, as well as placing top three in judging. McFatrige plans to use leadership skills developed through the NJHA and other organizations to help him during his maroon-coat journey and to inspire younger members

to strive to wear the maroon jacket. He plans to be part of the Hereford and cattle industry for a long time and hopes to give back and support the organization in any way possible.

Haley Mouser is the 19-year-old daughter of Gib and Michelle Mouser. She is a sophomore at Butler Community College majoring in agribusiness and competing on the school's livestock judging team. Mouser's goal is to earn a doctoral degree focusing on ruminant nutrition and genetics, while continuing to pursue her passion for public speaking. Prior to attending Butler, Haley was an active member of 4-H, FFA, the Minnesota Junior Hereford Association and NJHA.

Highlights from Mouser's NJHA involvement include being selected as the 2021 Fed Steer Shootout Senior of the Year, placing first in the 2021 JNHE future professionals contest, attending the inaugural BOLD Conference and serving on the Minnesota leadership team. Mouser's goal since attending her first JNHE was to wear a maroon jacket. She was honored to receive one last year. Her focus continues to be on serving juniors and paying forward all that was given to her in the NJHA.

Hannah Pearson is the 22-year-old daughter of Wade and Michelle Pearson. She recently graduated from Texas Tech University (TTU) with a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications with a minor in animal science. Pearson was a member of the TTU meat and livestock judging teams. She was also active in Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow and Tech Cattlewomen.

Pearson has been an active member of the Nebraska Junior Hereford Association for 16 years and served on the Nebraska Junior Hereford Association board in numerous positions and as the 2019 Nebraska State Hereford Queen. Her excitement for the beef industry has grown through the NJHA and Nebraska Junior Hereford Association. She loves to share this enthusiasm with junior members.

Kaylee McInvale is the 21-year-old daughter of Hoyt and Crystal McInvale. She is completing her final semester at Tarleton State University

(TSU), majoring in animal science and minoring in agricultural economics. McInvale plans to pursue a master's degree with an emphasis in animal nutrition or reproductive health. She is active at TSU as part of the Block and Bridle Club. She serves as the senior residential leader and is also very active in Sigma Alpha, where she serves as the scholarship chair and committee head.

McInvale has been raising and showing cattle all her life and has been a part of several breed associations. She served as the youth activities intern for the American Shorthorn Association. She has been active in the Texas Junior Horned and Polled Associations for the last 10 years and served as the 2020-2021 National Hereford Queen. She was inspired by previous leaders in the maroon coat and hopes she can inspire those around her to follow their dreams both on and off the NJHA board.

Isaac Rhode is the 20-year-old son of Jeff and Susan Rhode. He is a junior at the University of Missouri (Mizzou), majoring in agriculture with emphases in animal science, agricultural business and agricultural leadership. He is involved in the Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity, Block and Bridle Club, Collegiate Farm Bureau and National-Agri Marketing Association. He interned this summer for Show-Me Ethanol, gaining valuable experience in the agriculture byproducts sector. His career plans are working in a sales or service role with livestock producers and continuing to raise Hereford cattle with his family.

Rhode served as a director for the Missouri Junior Hereford Association, including terms as president and secretary. He has exhibited at 12 JNHEs. This inspired his passion for the Hereford breed and the NJHA. Rhode has also served leadership roles in the Missouri Junior Cattleman's Association and the Missouri Junior Angus Association, and he has been recognized for his involvement in FFA on the state and national level. His goal as an NJHA director is to make an impact on other people's lives by helping them achieve their goals and dreams. His motto for life is: "Adapt to change in any situation." **HW**