



25 YEARS OF HISTORY AND MANY DECADES OF

Looking back and moving forward.

by *Lauren Jones*

History offers great perspective. It allows us to look back and learn, marvel at how things have changed and compare things that have stayed the same.

The upcoming 25th annual Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), sponsored by VitaFerm® since 2007, is the pinnacle summer event for more than 900 National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members from across the United States and Canada. They come together for

a week of family fun, competition and celebration.

However, the junior nationals and the organizations behind them looked quite different 25 years ago before the National Junior Polled Hereford Council (NJPHC) and the American Junior Hereford Association (AJHA) merged to become the NJHA and host the first JNHE in 2000.

The American Polled Hereford Association (APHA) and the American Hereford Association

(AHA) merged in 1995. The five years between 1995-2000 marked a time of connection, change and growth for the Hereford breed. It was in those transitional years that the foundation for the newly branded JNHE was created.

Keep reading to gain a firsthand perspective of how the current JNHE came to be, from three long-time Hereford leaders, breeders and supporters who helped shape the organization in the early days: Bill Doig, 1998-2000 NJPHC director;



The first JNHE was held in Tulsa, Okla., in 2000. The event brought together hundreds of exhibitors from across the country.

SUPPORT

Craig Crutcher, 1999 AJHA president; and Chris Stephens, former AHA director of youth activities, 1995 chairman of the NJPHC board and chairman of the first youth merger committee.

Coming together

When the polled and horned associations merged in 1995, discussions began about merging the junior associations, programs and the national junior shows.

Crutcher says a joint event was very important, explaining, “We felt like this could be one of the first big steps that could be made to join the junior associations.”

Leadership from both organizations gathered around the table and began their work toward merging the associations.

“The two junior associations had to really look deep into both associations’ programs to decide what made each association great and how best to bring forward those really strong programs to form the new NJHA,” Stephens says. “The NJPHC and the AJHA had excellent programs in place for their respective associations, so we started with leadership and competition and how both junior organizations worked in terms of leadership and elections.”

No stone was left unturned.

“We worked through every detail, including what the joint board would wear,” Doig explains. “The polled board wore a blue jacket, and the horned board wore a red jacket. That is how we

evolved to having the current board members wearing a maroon jacket.

“At the end of the merger meeting, both boards walked out of that room with our heads held high, and we had an optimism for the future. However, I don’t think any of us could have imagined what this event has turned into now.”

Twenty-five years of growth

The very first JNHE was held in Tulsa, Okla., at the Tulsa State Fairgrounds. Oklahoma was the first state to merge its adult and



The late Bob and Dolores Call were a driving force behind the success of the first JNHE and the events that followed. Pictured (l to r) are: Dolores and Bob Call and Brian Healey.

junior associations, so it was appropriate to host the first joint event in Oklahoma.

“Mr. Bob Call was (the Oklahoma) JNHE chairman,” Stephens says. “The way that Bob structured the committees, delegated, empowered and communicated was a well-oiled machine. A template that was permanently etched in my memory for years to come as I became AHA director of youth activities and with the reorganization of the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA).”

The first show brought together almost 1,000 head of cattle; 589 owned heifers and 372 head from

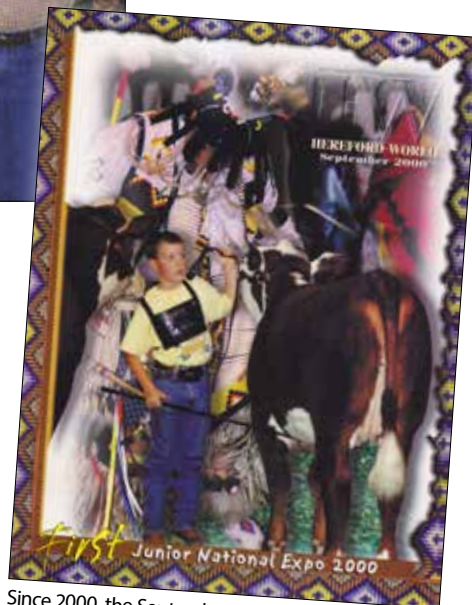
the cow-calf pair, bull, steer and bred-and-owned female shows.

Last year’s JNHE in Madison, Wis., welcomed more than 800 members exhibiting 770 owned females, 227 bred-and-owned females, 37 cow-calf pairs, 72 bred-and-owned bulls and 108 steers — 26% more cattle than the first joint event.

Over the past 25 years, the JNHE has grown to be one of the largest single-breed shows in the nation, but it came from humble beginnings.

“The size of the show has changed by leaps and bounds,”

Crutcher says. He attended his first junior national Hereford show in the summer of 1987 and remembers the shows used to be held at ranches or county fairgrounds. Recalling the



Since 2000, the September Hereford World has been dedicated to recapping the annual JNHE.

facilities of the 1999 event held at the Dawes County Fairgrounds in Chadron, Neb., Crutcher says, “It may not be big enough to host some of today’s state preview shows.”

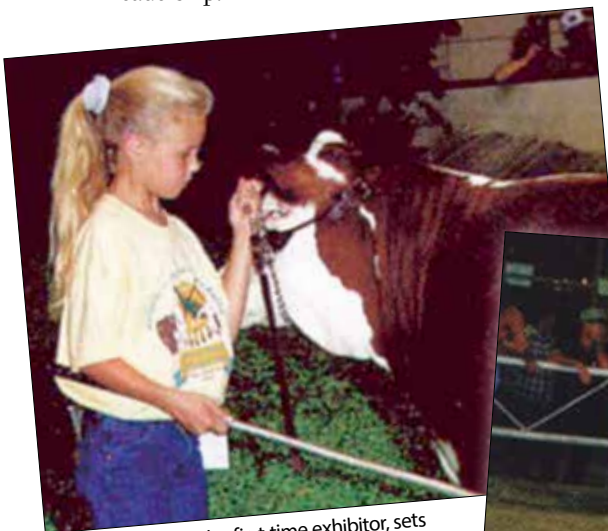
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Not only has the JNHE grown over the last quarter century, but the NJHA and HYFA have grown with it.

“The amazing growth of HYFA, combined with the growth and organizational structure of the JNHE, are the two biggest changes that have progressed our junior organization and set the JNHE on sound footing for years to come,” Stephens explains. “The re-birth of HYFA and the realignment in the organizational structure of the JNHE was the goal of many avid junior supporters.”

Both Stephens and Crutcher agree the scholarship programs for NJHA members have grown tenfold through the years due to the tremendous support of Hereford breeders and AHA leadership.



Tommie Lynn Mead, a first-time exhibitor, sets up her heifer in the showmanship contest during the 2000 JNHE.

Hereford family and a dedication to greatness

Although the JNHE has changed and grown, there are a few things that have remained constant over the past quarter century. This includes breeder dedication, a continued drive for success and a family atmosphere.

The JNHE has always been the pinnacle event of the summer.

“From exhibiting as a junior, to being on the national junior board, to now having my children participating at the junior nationals, there have been so many memories that will last a lifetime. The JNHE is so much more than a cow show. The people you meet along the way and the skills you learn will stick with you.”

— Bill Doig, 1998-2000 NJPHC director

Stephens describes it as “the front porch of the NJHA” and the “flagship event that brings in the families and junior members.”

“The quality of the cattle at the JNHE has improved so much over the past 25 years,” Doig says. “Many of the top genetics used to be only owned and exhibited by large ranches. Now, we see juniors breed and exhibit cattle that win at the JNHE and many other national shows.”

This family atmosphere has crossed over generations, as

nationals, there have been so many memories that will last a lifetime,” Doig says. “The JNHE is so much more than a cow show. The people you meet along the way and the skills you learn will stick with you for your lifetime.”

As we look toward the next 25 years, the Hereford breed and its youth are only expected to grow and continue succeeding.

“The ability to streamline the event from year to year, and to have the foundation serve as a vehicle for funding scholarships, education and research; it’s a very formidable partnership,” Stephens says. “It took a lot of great Hereford breeders and



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exhibitors from the very first JNHE now have children in the program.

“From exhibiting as a junior, to being on the national junior board, to now having my children participating at the junior

AHA leaders working together to get to where we are today. It was not easy; it didn’t happen overnight, and we have more goals to achieve.”

The future is bright; here’s to the next 25 years. **HW**

