

# Speed Bumps, Stop Signs and Stockyards

Even leadership is bigger in Texas.

by *Chloé Durian*

“Don’t let the speed bumps become stop signs,” is how Matt Rush, Levelland, Texas, set the tone for National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members attending the 2024 Faces of Leadership conference in Fort Worth, Texas, July 28-31. A motivational speaker and artist, Rush has roots in the Hereford breed and a passion for educating the next generation of leaders.

The Faces of Leadership conference is designed to help NJHA members hone communications, team-building and other skills essential to becoming effective leaders. This year, 115 members from 25 states attended.

“Good leaders know how to lead themselves first. Don’t let that perfect hat cloud your vision of being where you are,” explained Haley Mouser, NJHA vice chairman, in her keynote presentation. “The hat that you should never take off, in all of life, is living every day with a purpose.”

Conference participants enjoyed several unique learning opportunities during the event including:

- An up-close look into Allflex USA Inc., and how their technology and data-driven solutions are shaping the industry.
- Livestock handling and processing presented by the Texas Christian University (TCU) ranch management program.
- Beef Quality Assurance and vaccination protocols presented by Merck Animal Health USA.

## **Making connections**

For the first time, the conference included Bridging the Gap, a unique career learning and networking event, which also takes place during the annual VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). It included representatives from 14 agricultural companies and universities.



“Faces of Leadership is a tool to not only build leaders, but to get these young people started on a successful career path. We hope they stay in agriculture, but whatever industry they land in after college, we want them to be armed with the knowledge and the skillsets to be successful,” says Amy Cowan, American Hereford Association director of youth activities and foundation.

Participants also had ample opportunity for fun, including time in the historic Fort Worth Stockyards, a visit to the Cowboy Channel studio and a customized tour of Globe Life Field where the Texas Rangers play.

While visiting the Cowboy Channel, executive producer, Karlee Peterson, spoke about her unconventional path to her current position and encouraged each Hereford junior to follow their own path to a successful future, whether it is traditional or not. Conference attendees were able to draw upon the knowledge of professionals, like Peterson, and their peers, through NJHA roundtables, to make connections, exchange ideas and hone their leadership skills.

“It was easy to see the excitement in each participant,” says Salem Sifford, NJHA communications chair. “We had several new attendees, and they felt welcomed and included in every event. It was awesome to see all the new friendships formed and to watch as kids come out of their shells throughout the event.”

### Plan for next year

The annual Faces of Leadership conference — for NJHA members 14-21 years old — is made possible by the Coley-Malir Leadership Endowment and the Hereford Youth Foundation of America. The 2025 conference will be hosted at the innovative Purina Animal Nutrition Center near St. Louis, Mo. Watch for more information at [Hereford.org/youth/NJHA/Faces-of-Leadership](https://www.hereford.org/youth/NJHA/Faces-of-Leadership). **HW**



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The NJHA board of directors gifted one of the conference keynote speakers, Fort Worth mayor, Mattie Parker, with “Timeless,” a numbered print by Dino Cornay.



Conference attendees, Kristin Waters, Norborne, Mo., (left) and Jase Beltz, Canton, Kan., (right) participate in roundtables at Faces of Leadership.

