

Quality, Class and Confidence

Junior achievements point to the breed's bright future.



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The “Grand Daddy of ’Em All” in Grand Island, Neb., was all of that and then some. Come mid-July, there is no question that the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Exposition (JNHE) is the place to be.

I was truly impressed by the quality of cattle exhibited by National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members from 41 states and Canada. More than ever this year, I enjoyed studying the blend of phenotypic and genotypic quality scattered throughout the shows. Wherever the cattle placed in class, I was encouraged by the way Hereford breeders continue to meld breed-leading performance numbers with front-pasture phenotypic quality. Those who strive for this combination will see their breeding programs rewarded for their efforts now and in the future.

Beyond their cattle, I continue to be blown away by the individual talent in our junior program, which was on full display throughout the event. Announcing from the stage gave me a front row seat to the passion and class defining all exhibitors in the showing and all contest participants — around 800 in total. Everything from interactions during check-in and the highly competitive Hereford bowl to the cattle shows left me fired up about the future of the Hereford breed.

The 25th anniversary of the JNHE will be celebrated for a long time. This noteworthy achievement underscores extraordinary progress and the power of working together to provide opportunity for all.

Embracing opportunity

Prior to the JNHE, I had the opportunity to host Mike Simpson and Bonnie Coley-Malir on the *1881* podcast to discuss the early days of Hereford junior national shows, as well as the field days. Simpson was the youth activities director for the

American Polled Hereford Association and helped organize the first national junior polled show. Coley-Malir served the same role for the American Hereford Association (AHA) in the late 1980s and attended the first national junior horned show. If you haven't listened to this podcast, you need to take the opportunity.

The vision these leaders had and the value they saw in the early days of bringing like-minded, enthusiastic people together for a few days was the start of something amazing.

The first national junior Hereford shows took place 50 years ago — 25 years before the inaugural JNHE. The polled show was held in Nashville, Tenn., and one of the early National Hereford Field Days took place at Rusk Ranch in Sun City, Kan. Although it was before my time, the Field Day at Sun City was about 10 miles from where I grew up. People in the county still talk about what a great event it was. I've been told they fed more than 6,000 people in a pasture. Times have certainly changed, but the love and passion for Hereford cattle remain.

Join us in Kansas City

I hope you've booked your trip to the AHA Annual Membership Meeting and Educational Forum in Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 24-27. The Educational Forum offers a dynamic lineup of topics and speakers. I also will be excited to share findings from our ongoing research projects and strategic initiatives for breed improvement. You can find the complete schedule in this issue of *Hereford World* on Page 15.

Keep up the good work, and keep them sound. **HW**