

# MORE PRECIOUS THAN JEWELS

**Kay Knight named 2024 Woman of the Year by the National Hereford Women.**

When Kay Knight, Mason Texas, was approached by good friend and then National Hereford Women (NHW) board member Shannon Worrell, also of Mason, Texas, in 2019 about designing a line of high-end, cattle-themed jewelry, her initial reaction was to laugh.

“And then I went, ‘How do I go about doing this?’” Knight says. “I had no clue. I didn’t know anything about cattle at all. I’m a city girl.”

Knight has been in the jewelry making business for more than 50 years. She cut her teeth polishing silver, arranging displays and performing administrative work before starting a career as a diamond dealer and independent designer in 1984. She currently owns and operates Kay Knight Designs with her husband, Trey Carrington.

After some trial and error, Knight perfected the show heifer silhouette and attended a NHW board meeting armed with several potential designs. Five weeks later, she took her pieces to the 2019 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Denver, Colo.

“We took it to Denver, and that was the first time anybody had seen it outside of the board,” Knight says. “It was a big hit. After that, people were just pretty much lined up in front of our booths to buy something.”

Worrell originally brought her idea to Knight with the intent of partnering to sell the line of jewelry to raise funds for scholarships. Several months later, at the American Royal, Knight presented the NHW with a check for \$3,000 — marking the beginning of Knight’s partnership with the NHW to grow its scholarship fund.

## The Lady of the Royal

Knight created her first official line of NHW jewelry in 2019, and every year since then the NHW has organized a raffle for a one-of-a-kind necklace



Kay Knight, of Kay Knight Designs, was named the 2024 Hereford Woman of the Year. Pictured (l to r) are: NHW president Sally Wingler, Christiana, Tenn.; Kay Knight, Mason, Texas; and NHW director Cameron Kolinski, Patrick Springs, Va.

created by Knight, coined the “Lady of the Royal.” The organization sells 100 raffle tickets for \$100 each. The winner of the necklace is announced before the Ladies of the Royal Sale, held in conjunction with the American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting and Educational Forum and the American Royal.

“For the six years I’ve done it, I’ve used the same style of cow. That’s never changed. What changes is the color of metal I use, whether it’s white, rose or yellow gold, and the different color of diamonds or stones I put on it. All six of them are different.

“But I am really, really proud that we’re able to donate the piece to them. And then they keep all the proceeds from that,” Knight says. “I’ve been able to help them raise \$60,000 so far.”

## A proud partnership

It’s common to see Knight and her husband at their booth, selling jewelry at events like the JNHE, AHA Annual Meeting and the Texas Hereford Show.

“It’s changed the way I do business. It’s changed everything,” Knight says. “But I tell you the absolute best thing about it is the people that I have met along the way. I have friends all over

the United States now. All cattle-related, because I see them every year at these same events.”

Most of all, Knight now sees the value in what a show calf — and a youth livestock organization, like the National Junior Hereford Association — can do for young people.

“They are actually participating in life with each other, and these kids are going to be friends when they’re 50 years old,” Knight says. “Because they started out so young, they’ve learned so much, and they have such respect for their animals and adults. I love it.”

Knight enjoys seeing young women wearing her jewelry in the showing and is extremely proud to contribute a portion of her sales and donate the “Lady of the Royal” to the NHW each year.

“Kay will tell you that she is honored to be part of National Hereford Women, as that is her nature,” Sally Wingler, NHW president, noted before presenting the bronze cow to Knight. “But it is us who have been blessed by her friendship.” **HW**