

Investing in the Future

For more than 25 years, the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) has been a summer highlight for Hereford youth. At the heart of the event is the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA), a driving force behind the opportunities available to junior members. Through scholarships, leadership development and fundraising, HYFA ensures that Hereford juniors have the resources they need to succeed in and out of the showring.

"HYFA was created to support Hereford youth in all aspects of their development," says Bruce Everhart, HYFA board member. "From scholarships to leadership training, we are committed to providing opportunities that make a lasting impact."

The four pillars of HYFA

HYFA's mission is built on four key pillars: scholarship, education, leadership and research. These pillars shape the foundation's efforts to empower Hereford youth, ensuring they have the tools and opportunities to grow both personally and professionally.

"When you talk about the four pillars of HYFA, the strength comes from the fact that they are all pretty equally represented," Everhart says. "They all have different purposes but are still very important in terms of their impact on advancing the Hereford breed."

Through scholarship programs, educational initiatives and leadership training, HYFA continues to provide avenues for junior members to gain valuable experience and support. While research remains a broader aspect of the foundation's work, its primary focus at JNHE revolves around creating a community while investing in youth through financial assistance and leadership development.

Building lifelong leadership

While the showring is at the center of the JNHE, the purpose of the event extends far beyond the backdrop. HYFA prioritizes leadership development, ensuring juniors gain the skills needed to excel in the agricultural industry and beyond. Through various leadership-focused events and activities at the JNHE, young people engage in teamwork, decision-making and industry networking. Throughout the week, they develop valuable skills that will serve them well into the future.

"Leadership doesn't just come from being on the junior board; it happens through every aspect of JNHE," Everhart says. "These young people are learning responsibility, communication and how to present themselves in a professional way."

Education is another key pillar of HYFA's mission, and that commitment is evident in various opportunities at JNHE. From Bridging the Gap to the speech and Future Professionals contests, JNHE helps National Junior Hereford Association members prepare for their future.

Additionally, HYFA awards more than \$200,000 in scholarships each year, including the HYFA scholarships presented during JNHE.

"We've structured our finances to ensure that we can provide a high level of support for generations to come," Everhart says. "These scholarships don't just help fund education; they recognize and reward the hard work and dedication of our youth."

Beyond financial assistance, these scholarships stand as a testament to the determination and passion of Hereford youth. Combined with leadership opportunities and educational experiences at JNHE, they reinforce HYFA's mission to invest in the next generation, ensuring the youth are equipped with both the knowledge and skills to be successful in the future.

"We are the beginning. Youth as young as 7 years old can be engaged and involved in the breed," Everhart says. "Hopefully, they grow into dedicated individuals who pursue careers in agriculture or remain lifelong Hereford enthusiasts, continuing to support the industry in their own way."

Fueling the future

HYFA's impact at JNHE is made possible by the generosity of donors and fundraising efforts. The HYFA Live 5K Race brings together exhibitors, families and supporters in a run that raises funds to support Hereford youth. Additionally, the Foundation Club allows donors to make annual contributions, ensuring the continued growth of scholarships and leadership programs.

"The generosity of our donors is what makes this all possible," Everhart says. "From participating in the 5K to joining the Foundation Club, every contribution plays a role in supporting Hereford youth."

With more than \$7.4 million in assets and a goal of reaching \$10 million, the foundation's long-term vision ensures future generations of Hereford youth will continue to benefit from scholarships, leadership development and educational opportunities.

"There's been a whole host of people who have helped us grow to where we are today, and we know they'll help us reach that next milestone," Everhart says. "The Hereford breed has a rich tradition of mentorship and support, and that's something we intend to build on for years to come."

As JNHE approaches, HYFA's influence will be evident in every scholarship awarded, leadership opportunity provided and each junior who walks away with a renewed passion for the breed. Through fundraising, mentorship and unwavering community support, HYFA is investing in the future of Hereford youth one opportunity at a time. **HW**