

Step Into Your Future

by *Harlee Watson*

As the dust settles from another incredible and busy show season, it's impossible to not feel proud of what Hereford youth have accomplished so far this year — from the early mornings in the wash rack and excitement of stepping into the showring to the satisfaction of seeing hard work pay off. The close of another show season also reminds me the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) experience stretches far beyond the backdrop and offers countless ways for members to grow, learn and lead.

While banners are well worth the celebration, the opportunities outside the showring are vital in shaping NJHA members.

Scholarships, JNHE and more

Begin with the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) scholarships, which encourage college-aged members to reflect on their goals, articulate their passions and take meaningful steps toward their futures. These scholarships are designed for every member willing to share their story, highlight their involvement and dream about what comes next. Now is the perfect time to gather your materials, polish your resume and take advantage of the support HYFA proudly provides each spring.

At the same time, preparation for the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) contests offers a chance to stay engaged all year long, with opportunities ranging from public speaking, photography and poster design contests to livestock judging and the always-competitive Hereford bowl. These contests challenge juniors to build confidence and discover new interests they might not have found inside the showring.

For members eager to understand the commercial side of the beef industry, the NJHA Fed Steer Shootout offers a unique, real-world view of cattle feeding and the performance data driving value, while providing a firsthand look at how their genetics perform in the feedlot and on the rail. The annual NJHA Fed Steer Shootout Field Day expands the opportunity by giving participants a chance to see their cattle on feed, while providing hands-on education to all who attend. This program highlights Hereford's ability to excel in real-world conditions and contribute to a more sustainable beef industry.

For those craving connection, adventure and personal growth, the Faces of Leadership conference stands as one of the most transformative events the NJHA offers, bringing together juniors from across the country for workshops, industry tours, leadership development and friendships lasting long after the conference ends. It's a place where junior members learn to communicate, collaborate and step into their potential.

Together, these opportunities help develop well-rounded leaders — individuals who understand the beef industry, communicate effectively, think critically and contribute meaningfully to their communities and the agricultural world. No matter your age, background or comfort zone, the NJHA has a place for you. The show barn may be where many juniors begin their journey, but it doesn't have to be where they stop.

The NJHA encourages every member to explore the full range of experiences

available, find the opportunities that fit your passions and discover just how big your future can be when you step beyond the showring. The NJHA board of directors is ready when you are, waiting to support you as you take the next step on your journey as an NJHA member. **HW**



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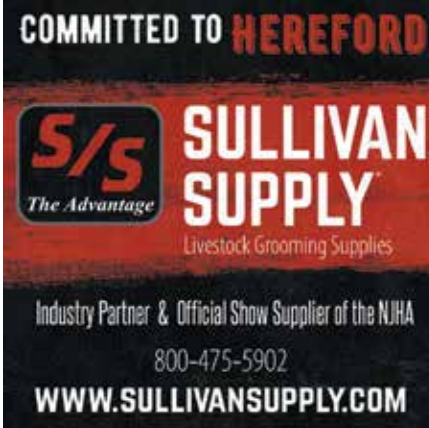
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