Power Forward

NJHA and Hereford opportunity grow with HYFA.

by ***Wes Ishmael***

Hereford breeders have long been known for their generosity when it comes to supporting Hereford youth. How they've harnessed their willingness to invest in the next generation through the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) is nothing short of inspirational.

A $50,000 gift for scholarships in 1989 grew to $218,000 by 2000, when HYFA was established. The assets included funds from what were the American Hereford Youth Foundation and American Polled Hereford Foundation.

HYFA fundraising gained focus in 2003 with the First Harvest Gala. Funds grew quickly to $1 million by 2006 and then to $5.4 million in 2021. Currently, HYFA assets are more than $7.7 million.

What started as a way to provide more scholarships to more members of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) has become a means to empower holistic youth development, which encompass HYFA's four pillars: scholarships, leadership, education and research.

Scholarship first

"Scholarships were the beginning and remain the HYFA cornerstone. Currently, we're proud to have 36 scholarship endowments helping NJHA members further their education as they pursue career goals," explains Amy Cowan, American Hereford Association (AHA) director of youth activities and foundation. These endowments represent more than $3.6 million, earmarked exclusively for scholarships. HYFA has awarded nearly $2.5 million in scholarships since the foundation began.

"The Vanier Family, CK Ranch in Kansas, changed the scholarship trajectory with a $100,000 annual gift that pays a $10,000 scholarship to 10 individuals each year," Cowan says. "Last fall marked $1 million in scholarships awarded by the Vanier family, which is an amazing testament to the next generation of Hereford youth."

Likewise, Cowan says Hereford families and organization leaving a legacy through endowed scholarships over time continue as the bedrock to HYFA scholarships.

"The foundation owes a great deal to founding HYFA board members, like Hereford breeders Jo Ellard and Bob Call, Hereford enthusiasts and friends who have contributed to the named scholarship endowments that have and will continue to honor these Hereford legacies as long as HYFA is in existence," Cowan says. "These early scholarship endowments helped HYFA build a firm foundation that paved the way to supporting additional pillars to the organization."

During HYFA's history and before, the National Hereford Women (NHW) has also been an integral part of the scholarship story.

"Several named scholarships on the endowment roster were made possible by NHW and HYFA collaborating to raise funds for special initiatives, such as the National Hereford Queen's Scholarship, NOP Founders, Faces of Leadership and more," Cowan says.

Expanding boundaries of opportunity

Educational opportunities extend well beyond scholarships, of course. HYFA's JNHE Legacy Fund,

The Vanier Family, CK Ranch of Kansas, gifts $100,000 each year to Hereford juniors in the form of $10,000 scholarships awarded to 10 young people. Last year's recipients (pictured) marked $1 million dollars of scholarships distributed through the family's generosity.

in particular — founded in 2013 with the Growing a Lasting Legacy Campaign — has generated more than $2.6 million, enabling the organization to both preserve and broaden junior opportunities.

In part, the Legacy Fund helps support the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE).

"With escalating costs associated with hosting the JNHE and how big the event has grown, the growth of the Legacy Fund is vital to the future success of the JNHE," Cowan explains. "Without the Legacy Fund and folks like Sue and the late Jim Rowland, Steve and Jill Folkman, Gary and Kathy Buchholz and remaining funds from the early events, we would not be able to sustain our flagship event that Hereford families from around the country and Canada look forward to each summer."

In fact, the JNHE — the backbone of the NJHA — is the envy of other junior organizations. NJHA sets the precedent for junior associations, not only because of the cattle shows, but also because of the educational and leadership opportunities that take place outside the showring all year long.

As an example, the NJHA Fed Steer Shootout is also a pacesetter for the junior organization, providing real-world opportunities for NJHA members to learn more about the cattle feeding and packing sectors firsthand.

"Supporters like Bar One Ranch and Texas Star Dance were on the ground floor of this educational opportunity and quickly saw a need to fund an endowment that would perpetuate this program for years to come," Cowan says. "The impact of teaching our junior members about the part they play in feeding the world has been huge."

Leadership always

While leadership development has always been a common thread running throughout HYFA, as Cowan mentioned, lion-hearted support enabled the organization to grow opportunities for NJHA members over time.

For instance, the Coley-Malir Endowment and GKB Cattle Endowment underpin leadership-building opportunities, such as the Faces of Leadership and Building on Leadership Development (BOLD) conferences.

"The clearest testimony HYFA has for leadership development are all of the young people who graduate from the NJHA ranks and go on to do big things in their careers," Cowan says. "For many it is in the agriculture field, and for some it is in other fields, but no matter where they land, HYFA is proud to have helped build them. Whether it was a scholarship that made the difference in someone going to college, a leadership conference that helped an individual decide to run for the NJHA board of directors or the JNHE that introduced a member to their current boss, we are proud to have played a part."

Bolstering breed improvement

HYFA added its fourth pillar of research in 2009, through the Hereford Research Fund (HRF), as it benefits both current and future Hereford breeders.

"John Loewen was on the ground floor of the research mission, and many breeders and supporters followed suit, helping support various breed improvement projects, including the National Reference Sire Program," Cowan says.

More recently, the HRF has supported cooperative research projects with Colorado State University, AgNext and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. This research covers a broad gambit from documenting the efficiency of F1 baldy females to methane emissions and more accurate measurement of red meat yield.

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Leveraging for more

The HRF also illustrates the canny way HYFA's leadership expands the organization's expertise to manage gifts and giving for other related organizations.

"Organizations like the Wisconsin Hereford Association, Western States Hereford Association and Livestock Marketeers house their scholarship funds in HYFA, and the foundation staff helps to administer their annual scholarships," Cowan explains. "This is a win-win for HYFA and the organizations involved. By joining forces, we can help each other make an even bigger impact."

NJHA members enjoy unmatched opportunity due to committed members and relentless support from family — the Hereford family— and others who see how these opportunities help shape Hereford juniors into cattle and beef industry leaders. HYFA has elevated and accelerated these opportunities for 26 years.

Such dynamic opportunity does more than serve current NJHA members, it continues to attract more families to the breed, many of whom become active members of the AHA. HW

Editor's note: Future issues of *Hereford World* will delve deeper into various aspects of HYFA and the people behind its amazing trajectory.