Putting in the Work

Beltz named champion senior showman and Junior Hereford Herdsman of the Year.

by ***Gentry Warner***

Before the winning handshake, applause and tears, Jase Beltz spent years preparing for a moment Hereford juniors dream about.

That preparation led Beltz, Canton, Kan., to center-ring at the 2026 VitaFerm® Junior Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Madison, Wis., not once but three times. He captured the senior showman championship, the Junior Hereford Herdsman of the Year title and helped his team top the fitting contest.

Beltz humbly kept his expectations of showring success low leading up to the junior national despite the countless hours he had spent in the barn preparing — knowing the quality of the competition and the skills of his showring peers. He frankly didn't plan to win, but his success was proof that his process worked.

"When I entered the final drive, I was nervous and anxious," Beltz says. "I had worked so hard for this opportunity and just making it to the finals was an honor."

The steps the senior showmanship judge, Kirk Stierwalt, took toward Beltz as he offered his hand seemed to hit the ground a little harder. "I had accomplished my biggest goal within the breed," Beltz says. "That handshake is something I'll replay in my mind forever."

Walking out of the showring, he didn't have many words. Instead, he found his parents. "I couldn't hold back the tears," he says, "Winning meant the world to me."

Showmanship is won at home

Beltz's first JNHE was the 2017 "Showing for the Roses" in Louisville, Ky. He watched the final drive that year with one thought in mind: One day, he wanted to be there. For more than 13 years, that dream shaped how he prepared. Each show became another opportunity to improve. He spent late nights in the barn preparing for lofty goals that were months away.

"Most of the preparation happened long before junior nationals," he says. "At home, we worked to build trust between us and the cattle, and through the year, we attended shows, so they were comfortable in the ring."

The Beltz family owns a small herd of Hereford cattle consisting mainly of old show heifers and recips for their embryo transfer program. Both his parents grew up in the industry. They're two of his greatest mentors and supporters. Josie Beltz, his younger sister, is hot on his heels, working just as hard to achieve her goals.

"It truly is a family operation," Beltz says. "I wouldn't have been able to do it without them."

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Beltz hugs and congratulates reserve champion senior showman, Beau Ann Graves, Chillicothe, Mo.

Beltz takes a moment to celebrate with his dad and sister. He says his family made winning possible.

After being announced as champion senior showman, Beltz shakes hands with senior showmanship judge Ky Stierwalt, Leedey, Okla.

For the past couple of years, Beltz has been fortunate enough to exhibit all bred-and-owned cattle at the JNHE. This is no small task, and he's extremely proud to present cattle he built.

"This year, all five of the cattle my family brought were bred-and-owned," Beltz says. "We have also grown to a point where we are able to sell a few heifers, bulls and steers each year."

A rocky road

Beltz experienced success early in his junior exhibition career. He won showmanship in the peewee division and was named reserve champion junior showman. While those accomplishments brought confidence, they also kickstarted one of his life's biggest lessons.

As those wins came, the work slowly faded.

"I began to fall short and lost my work ethic for a couple of years," he says. "My last two years, I fell short in the junior division and didn't make it to finals. This is what lit a fire back inside of me."

For the first time, Beltz found himself watching the final drive from the sidelines instead of competing in it. Those disappointing finishes forced him to take an honest look at what had changed.

Looking back, he realized his success hadn't come from talent alone. It was built from the countless hours spent in the barn, practice and his commitment to improving every time he stepped into the ring. Once he returned to the habits that had made him successful, the results followed.

"I learned that hard work pays off," Beltz says. "My commitment to practice and preparation is what has allowed me to find success."

His renewed focus earned him reserve champion honors twice in the intermediate division, proving he was back on the right track. However, the dream of winning the senior division lingered in his mind.

Outside the showring

Winning senior showmanship fulfilled a dream Jase Beltz had chased for more than a decade. Being named Junior Hereford Herdsman of the Year carried a different kind of meaning.

Unlike showmanship, which is decided by judges, the Junior Herdsman award is voted on by fellow National Junior Hereford

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Association members. It recognizes the exhibitor who represents the values of the Hereford breed long before stepping into the showring: stockmanship, leadership and a willingness to serve others.

With a field of accomplished finalists, Beltz never expected to hear his name announced.

"Seeing the extremely successful and high-achieving lineup that I was up against put doubt in my mind about my chances of winning," he says. "I would've never seen myself in this position when I first started in this breed."

Then his name echoed through the arena. As Beltz walked through the ring to receive his buckle, he wasn't thinking about the award itself. Instead, his mind drifted back through the years, building his family's Hereford herd, learning from mentors and growing alongside the people who had become family.

"When I heard my name announced as Junior Hereford Herdsman, I was overwhelmed with joy and excitement," Beltz says. "As I was walking through the ring to get my buckle, I was reflecting on how I had progressed through the Hereford breed and what I had learned."

Beltz celebrates being named Junior Hereford Herdsman of the Year with his family.

Standing nearby were the people who had helped make the moment possible. His parents and younger sister celebrated alongside him, sharing an accomplishment that had been years in the making.

"My parents and my sister were with me, and they were equally as excited as I was," he says. "Seeing the support that they always give me is the most valuable thing I could ever ask for."

To Beltz, the award isn't simply recognition for one week in Madison. It reflects years of early mornings in the barn, helping others before helping himself and earning the respect of the people who know firsthand what it

Andrew and Suzanne Matheny, Mayslick, Ky.; present Beltz, Canton, Kan., with his Junior Herdsman belt buckle.

takes to care for cattle. That is what makes being named Junior Hereford Herdsman one of the highest honors in the Hereford breed.

"It means the world," he says. "It's hard to put into words the honor that this is. Being selected by my fellow members showed me that my hard work was seen and recognized by others. This is an honor that I will cherish forever."

The Hereford Family

Beltz credits much of his success to growing up surrounded by great mentors within the industry. His parents showed cattle, giving him experienced role models from the very beginning.

Although he began showing Salers cattle, everything changed after attending his first JNHE. "I fell in love with the breed," he says. "But the cattle were just a small part of the reason we continued to keep coming year after year."

After his first couple years showing Herefords, he began to build a name for himself and meet people that would help shape him into the person he is today.

"The people in this breed are second to none," Beltz says. "It is truly a family, and the support for one another is unmatched. Traveling anywhere across the country, I know I'll have members of the Hereford family I can lean on if I need help."

Looking back, Beltz doesn't see the week as the moment everything came together. He sees it as the result of every lesson the Hereford breed has taught him along the way.

"I view this win as a reflection of the lessons I have learned," Beltz says. Without his support system, he explains the win and its impact on his future would not have been possible.

Beltz is currently attending Oklahoma State University, where he is majoring in agribusiness with a minor in finance. After earning his degree, he plans to pursue a career in the agricultural finance industry with a focus on commodities trading, while keeping the family operation running and expanding. Beltz has big plans for his future within the industry. HW

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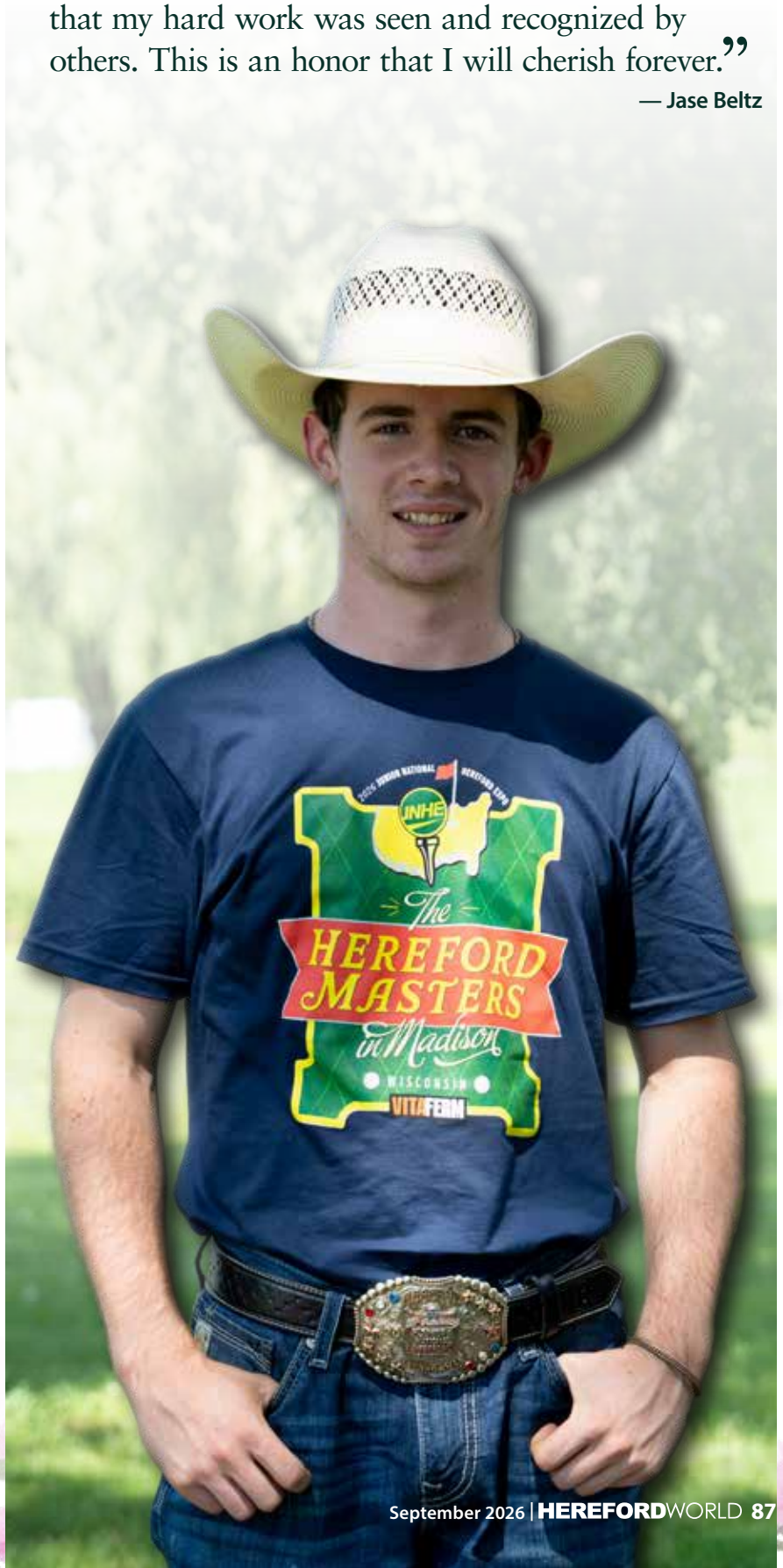

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Junior Herdsman Finalists

Aidyn Barber

Aidyn Barber, Channing, Texas, is the daughter of Brett Barber and Nicole Lowers. She is currently pursuing a degree in animal science at Texas Tech University.

For Barber, being named a Junior Hereford Herdsman candidate is one of the greatest honors of her junior show career. She is passionate about the breed and the way of life it provides for her family. Barber credits the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) with helping her become the person she is today and says there is no place she would rather be than in the barn. To be nominated for something she has spent her life working toward means everything.

Barber knows the recognition represents the sleepless nights and long hours she spends caring for her cattle along with her unwavering dedication for pursuing her goals. For Barber, this nomination is proof that dreams really do come true.

As she continues her education at Texas Tech University, Barber looks forward to building upon the lessons she has learned through the Hereford breed, while pursuing a future in agriculture.

Fallon Gohr

Fallon Gohr, Madras, Ore., grew up on her family's operation, Gohr Cattle Co., where she developed a deep passion for livestock and a strong work ethic. The Gohr family started with Angus and Simmental genetics, but Herefords became a key part of their program when Gohr began her junior show career. Today, she's a familiar face at Hereford events and has exhibited at the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) for the last 12 years.

Gohr's experience in the NJHA is marked by consistency, leadership and growth. She has earned multiple top 10 finishes in showmanship, including the 2022 intermediate showmanship championship and, most recently, the 2024 senior showmanship title. Gohr also celebrated division wins in the cattle show and has found national success in the Hereford breed and beyond — exhibiting the grand champion horned female at the 2024 Cattlemen's Congress junior and open Hereford show, along with raising the reserve grand champion Angus female that same year. In addition, Gohr has been fortunate to exhibit a champion Hereford heifer at the National Western Stock Show in Denver for the past three years.

Gohr completed her associate degree at Linn-Benton Community College and will be attending Texas Tech University, where she plans to join the livestock judging team. With a strong foundation in cattle and a passion for the industry, Gohr is excited to take the next step toward a future in agriculture.

Tory Miller

Tory Miller, Lebanon, Mo., is the daughter of Rusty and Marijane Miller. Miller graduated from Missouri State University in May with a bachelor's degree in agricultural business and a minor in animal science. Since graduating, Miller has been working full time on her family's operation, Miller Herefords, where she has been involved in every aspect of the day-to-day management of the herd. Most of her days are spent in the show barn working hair or in the pasture checking cows.

The friendships, opportunities and experiences she has gained through the NJHA have helped shape who she is today, and she can't wait to continue spreading her knowledge and passion for the breed and association.

Miller was honored to have been selected as a Junior Hereford Herdsman candidate and is grateful that others recognize the dedication and passion she has for her cattle. The Hereford breed has been a significant part of her life. This year marks her 21st consecutive JNHE, after attending her first junior national at just 2 weeks old. It is a privilege for her to be recognized among such an outstanding group of young cattlemen and cattlewomen.

Rylee Stockdale

Rylee Stockdale, Dayton, Pa., is the daughter of Curt and Bree Stockdale. Raised in the Hereford breed, Stockdale developed a passion for livestock at an early age. The cattle industry has shaped both her character and her commitment to agriculture. Today, she is a hairstylist at Total Beauty Bar, where she enjoys providing each client with a personalized, high-quality experience, while remaining actively involved in her family's Hereford operation.

Throughout her junior career, Stockdale has embraced the values of hard work, leadership and service that define the Hereford breed. Being selected as a Junior Hereford Herdsman nominee is one of the greatest honors of her junior show career, recognizing not only her accomplishments but also her dedication behind the scenes. For Stockdale, the nomination reflects the early mornings, late nights, thoughtful breeding decisions and countless hours spent caring for livestock.

At home, Stockdale is deeply involved in the daily management of the cattle operation and takes pride in every aspect of caring for the herd. As she looks beyond her junior show career, Stockdale plans to continue producing high-quality Hereford cattle while mentoring and encouraging the next generation of cattlemen and cattlewomen. She hopes to invest in young people the same way others have invested in her by sharing the knowledge, work ethic and passion that have guided her journey. **HW**