Foundation's Focus

Legacy Building

by **Ray Ramsey**

Sitting down each fall to reflect on a year's worth of activities, scholarships and relationships supported by the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) and its work makes me feel increasingly grateful for the impact that this Foundation and every one of its tireless supporters continue to have.

This impact flows through many avenues, including scholarships, supporting the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo — an annual keystone event for the National Junior Hereford Association — and the growing number of opportunities HYFA fosters. All of our efforts are guided by the organization's pillars — scholarship, leadership, research and education.

I'd like to share a few interesting figures with you to help illustrate the crucial role that organizations, like HYFA, are playing in building future generations.

- In 1926, 26% of the U.S. population was involved in production farming and ranching; a total of just over 30 million people.
- Fast forward to 2026, and we see less than 2% of the U.S. population involved in production farming and ranching; totaling 3.4 million people.

Let's pause for a moment. Consider that in 1926, one out of every four Americans you encountered was involved in agriculture. Today, you would need to meet 50 Americans to find that same one. Moreover, we only see 39% of family farms and ranches survive into the third generation and a mere 1% make it to the sixth.

I don't know how you feel reading those figures, but I'll tell you how I feel. First, I feel extremely grateful for growing up on and continuing to steward a family farm. Right after that, I feel deeply concerned. Without a doubt, there is an unlimited number of variables to consider when you see the declining number of young U.S. farmers and ranchers staying on the operation. Most of these variables are out of our reach in terms of being able to control or alter them.

Do you know what we can control? Our commitment and dedication to investing in our youth, not only in the form of scholarships, but in participation in any number of the programs that we offer throughout the year to educate, engage and inspire the exceptional youth within our breed.

These future generations are not only going to be whom we look toward as leaders and innovators in our country, but they are also our legacy — a legacy that we can continue to build, foster and promote together. It is a legacy that will stand the test of time because even if our numbers are smaller, our combined strength has never been greater.

Without the support of our current and past HYFA board members, staff and monetary contributors, none of this would be possible. With the total current asset value of the Foundation at $9 million, not only will our impact on future generations continue to grow but the legacy of what we can do for Hereford youth will become an unstoppable force.

I am honored to continue leading that mission. HW

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