Youth Movement

Meaning Behind the Miles

by **Maddie Weaber**

Deep into autumn with the summer shows in the rearview, Hereford juniors are gearing up for another winter on the road, with Denver, Reno, Cattlemen's Congress and Fort Worth on the horizon. The national show season offers opportunities to exhibit cattle, reconnect with friends and continue building relationships through the Hereford breed.

For Cruz Colyer of Bruneau, Idaho, those opportunities are a part of life. Last winter, his family enjoyed showring success, winning divisions in Oklahoma City, Denver and Forth Worth, along with winning the bull show in Reno and Denver. While the banners are meaningful, it's the people and experiences behind them that help make each stop worthwhile.

"I don't have a favorite show; it's more about getting to see people at all of these shows," Colyer says. "It's humbling to see how many people believe in the Hereford breed and will make the trip to so many of the shows."

Growing up in the breed, Colyer has become increasingly involved in the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA), building relationships and gaining experiences that extend past the summer junior events. Through that involvement, he has developed an appreciation for the NJHA's impact.

"An experience that truly changed my life was the Faces of Leadership conference. It made me appreciate what I have, the NJHA and the friendships I have been fortunate enough to make through this organization," Colyer shares.

That perspective follows him into the national show season, where many of the same juniors, their families and breeders reconnect. While national shows bring competition to the ring, Colyer sees something extra in the Hereford breed.

"The NJHA has made me look forward to seeing all the people involved with it. There is an excitement that comes from being around such good people and being part of something bigger than yourself," Colyer says. "The friendships, energy and support within the NJHA are truly irreplaceable. Everyone is a friend, everyone is family, and everyone is there to see each other succeed."

Creating connections

For Colyer, that sense of community reflects the people who make the NJHA and American Hereford Association (AHA) what they are. This year, Colyer looks forward to reconnecting with those people, strengthening friendships and continuing to meet new people through the Hereford breed, its youth association and its events. His experience serves as a reminder that the NJHA's impact is not limited to summer events or the junior showring. The relationships, values and sense of belonging developed through the association continue to shape NJHA members' experience year-round.

"How you treat people will always matter more than what you have accomplished. I believe that is one of the most important lessons you can learn. You can have everything in the world, but if you do not have the NJHA, the AHA, your friends and your family standing behind you, you are missing the point," Colyer says. "The people you meet, the friendships you build and the way you make others feel will stay with you much longer than any award or accomplishment."

For Colyer, the start of the national show season marks more than a chance to step into the showring once more; it's a chance to put NJHA's lessons into action and continue representing the organization and the people shaping its junior members. For young people preparing to hit the road this winter, remember that the opportunities to learn, connect and grow through the NJHA are waiting at every stop along the way. HW

NJHA
NATIONAL JUNIOR HEREFORD ASSOCIATION

Chairman
Rylie Meinhardt, *rjmeinhardt@gmail.com*
Vice chairman
Matt Bruns, *mattbruns101@gmail.com*
Communications chair
Maddie Weaber, *maddieweaber@gmail.com*
Membership chair
Kendall Boatman, *kendallboatman@gmail.com*
Fundraising chair
Emma Ballinger, *emma.ballinger@uky.edu*
Leadership chair
Sarah Beth Callicott, *callicottsb@gmail.com*
Directors
Jordan Mitchem, *jkmitchem@gmail.com*
Gavin Rhode, *24grhode@gmail.com*
Aidyn Barber, *aidyn.barber06@gmail.com*
Rhett Lehman, *LHMN-Hereford@outlook.com*
Amberlyn Christenbury, *agchrist15@gmail.com*
Matalyn Martinson, *matalyn.martinson@gmail.com*
Director of youth activities
Amy Cowan
816-842-3757, acowan@hereford.org

JrHereford.org

