

The MARYLAND Mindset

The state of Maryland works year-round to travel to JNHE.

by Riley Greiten

“It’s not individual farms. It’s not individual families. It’s Maryland — one big team, and that’s how it’s been,” says Michelle Wolfrey, Maryland Junior Hereford Association (MJHA) advisor.

The “Maryland mindset,” as Wolfrey calls it, has been at the core of the organization for years. MJHA members fundraise, travel together and work alongside one another to attend the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), and the advisors pride themselves on the association’s inclusivity. The state’s teamwork doesn’t go unnoticed in the barn. Over the past few years, the MJHA even had exhibitors from other states travel with them to the JNHE.

“We welcome anyone. We don’t care what your cattle look like; we want everyone to be able to attend the JNHE,” Wolfrey says.

Growing up, Wolfrey and her sisters attended the JNHE and used Maryland’s hired pot trailer to haul their cattle.

“I don’t know where we would be if we hadn’t done this,” Wolfrey says. “We were just a couple little girls who had last-place cattle. We say it all the time. Everyone starts somewhere, and the fundraising of Maryland got us here.”

For decades, the MJHA has fundraised to send its members to JNHE. For some Maryland families, these funds make attending the JNHE possible.

Fundraising for the future

Wolfrey attended her first JNHE in Milwaukee, Wis., in the summer of



The JNHE is a continuous process for the MJHA, from raising funds together, to attending together.

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2005. She joined the team as an advisor a couple of months later. When she started, fundraising was already an integral part of the MJHA.

“It has always been the Maryland mindset — fundraising to go as a group,” Wolfrey explains. “Everyone has always known that we go as a unit.”

Almost 20 years ago, two of the association’s largest fundraisers were concession stands and an annual mulch sale. MJHA members would visit cattle sales throughout the year

and sell concessions to earn profits for their week at the JNHE. Today, Maryland fundraisers include anything from wrapping paper and fudge sales to a gun raffle, which is one of their most profitable events of the year.

The association begins fundraising for JNHE almost immediately after the current year’s event. With the MJHA raising anywhere from \$20,000 to \$25,000 annually, it is easy to see how this undertaking is a year-round effort.

“We pretty much start right after the current junior nationals ends,” Wolfrey says. “We have already started working on fundraising ideas for this coming fall.”

The money raised by the MJHA helps cover anything and everything involved in attending JNHE. One of the largest contributions is a leased pot trailer. MJHA youth can put their cattle on the pot trailer, free of charge, to be delivered to the JNHE. The MJHA also hires a tack trailer and driver to haul tack to the JNHE.

“If exhibitors had to haul their own cattle out here, some kids would never have the chance to attend the JNHE,” says Chris Bohrer, MJHA advisor.

Through their fundraising efforts, the state also provides four days of lunches, exhibitor gifts and pedigree signs for each Maryland exhibitor.

The process is constantly changing, as MJHA youth explain it. Members are always on the hunt for new ideas to produce money for their JNHE journey.

“Every year we want to be bigger and better. We really push our fundraising and try to see what steps we need to take to just go a little further,” says Karson Fahey, MJHA member. “This not only helps us juniors come to the JNHE and have a good time, but it helps our parents and advisors financially as well.”



MJHA teamwork shows in all members do during JNHE, including keeping their stalls in pristine condition.

Working together

Countless hours of preparation go into fundraisers held by the MJHA. Advisors, like Wolfrey and Bohrer, are a vital part of the association’s success.

“They are the best advisors around. I think a lot of what we’ve accomplished definitely would not have been possible without their work and support,” says Sheridan Chaney, MJHA member.

Members say their advisors go above and beyond to ensure a memorable JNHE experience.

“They do everything they can to make sure we have a good time out here, and it means a lot to all of us,” says Fahey.

It is crucial to note it is not just parents and advisors pitching in when it comes to fundraising; it is an all-hands-

on-deck effort. At MJHA meetings, members get together to discuss what fundraisers they want to hold for the upcoming year. The young people help with fundraising ideas and develop plans to execute each event.

“Really, the juniors come up with a lot of the ideas,” explains Fahey. “Usually, we try to do fundraisers that all of us have a common interest in, something that is exciting.”

Multiple fundraising events and planning meetings throughout the year allow junior members to become closer friends inside and outside of the showring.

“It definitely helps us become closer with each other because we are all working together,” Sheridan says.

“We all have an end-goal of coming to junior nationals and having the most successful week that we can.”

Friends first

Between Maryland state shows, fundraisers and out-of-state shows, it is easy to see how youth of all ages are involved in the association.

“Since we are such a close-knit group, it helps the younger kids want to become more involved,” says Rianna Chaney, MJHA member.

After being an advisor for 10 years, Bohrer says the most rewarding part is seeing kids form connections and begin to open up.

“You see the kids show up on the first day that are super, super quiet; then by the end of the week, they are friends with everybody in the group,” Bohrer says.

The “Maryland mindset” has been around since the association’s beginning, and members work hard to continue the tradition. Traveling to the JNHE is an opportunity cherished by many. MJHA members work year-round to share this experience with as many young people as possible. **HW**



State advisor, Chris Bohrer shuffles the deck for a game of cards with MJHA members during the JNHE.