

2023 FOLOW Conference

By Hannah Oleson, WJHA Vice President

The Wisconsin Junior Hereford Association (WJHA) hosted its 2nd Faces of Leadership of Wisconsin (FOLLOW) conference September 9-10, 2023 in River Falls, WI. The event was geared toward bringing like-minded youth together to grow and develop their leadership skills and learn more about opportunities in the beef and ag industries. The WJHA board planned several activities including leadership and educational workshops, farm tours, speakers, and fun! Registration was open to any youth who had an interest in learning about leadership and cattle.

On Saturday, September 9th, 15 juniors from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois came together for a day full of activities.

The first stop was at UW-River Falls Mann Valley Lab Farm, where we started the day with a tour of the farm with faculty member Brooke Giese. The tour highlighted different aspects of production agriculture that some of us weren't familiar with such as the swine and dairy facilities. After the tour, youth were split into four (4) groups that rotated through stations. Different educational stations were set up by the UWRF Beef Management Team, Livestock Judging Team, Block and Bridle Club, and Dr. Arquimides Reyes. Juniors learned about EPD's and picking out the best sires for their programs, practiced judging two (2) classes of cattle and played a fun game of cattle Jeopardy! One of my favorite parts of the weekend was getting to learn about ultrasounding steers with Dr. Arquimides Reyes. He taught us how to use the equipment and how to determine market readiness of a steer based on the ultrasound reading.

In the afternoon, the juniors went to the UWRF campus where they learned about harvesting animals and processing meat with Dr. Reyes and attended a leadership workshop led by Hannah Oleson and Jordan Lamb, which focused on creating goals and working as a team with others. Dr. Reyes also provided an opportunity to learn about meat judging and how to determine the quality of your beef. It was very interesting.

We ended our day at Windy Hills Hereford Farm where we were graciously hosted by Mark and Angie Friedrich and their family. While there, Mark provided a tour of his cattle facilities

including showing us his Cattleman's Delight Sale consignments and cow-calf operation. We were also able to see the progress of the 2023 WJHA Donation heifer that Mark won at the Wisconsin Hereford Association Spring Sale. It was cool to see the heifer, as the Donation heifer fundraiser supports events like FOLLOW and other leadership events, scholarships and activities throughout the year. The Friedrich's provided everyone with a delicious homemade dinner where we were able to sit down and share a meal with new and old friends. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't cooperating the best and we couldn't play Barnyard Ball which would have been a blast!

The next day, Sunday, September 10th, started early at Larson Hereford Farms in Spring Valley, WI. We were greeted by Fred and Lori Larson and got to hear the incredible history of their farm. The juniors were able to go on a hayride tour of Larson's scenic operation where we got to look at bulls, pairs and heifers. The weather was picture perfect that morning. After our hayride tour we listened to



2023 National Hereford Queen, Madison Katzenberger, speak about "Sundae's for Success". Her focus was on how to build a successful resume and sundae toppings represented various components of a resume. Her topic gave us a lot to think about as we begin to build our own resumes through the choices we're making today. After some deep thought about our futures, we rounded out the weekend with lawn games and a tasty lunch provided by the Larson Family.

We are extremely appreciative of the Friedrich and Larson families for hosting all of us and for taking the time to show us what family farming means to them. Also, a large thank-you goes out to Dr. Reyes and the students at UWRF for their willingness to share their excitement about learning with all of us. Their excitement was contagious. Most importantly thank you to Kim and BJ Jones for their efforts in advising the WJHA and supporting opportunities like this and Marie Prodell for the many hours she put into organizing the event with board members.