April 30, 2020

At the start of this year, few - If any - of us would have predicted that we would be having the conversations we are having now. Quarantine, ventilators, PPE, and anti-body tests are just a few of the terms that have become part of our daily conversations over the past two months.

My hometown of Chillicothe, Texas, with a population of 798, has not had a single confirmed case of COVID-19, even though my current home of Dallas has thousands. Despite the disparity in the reach of the disease, the effects of what is happening will be felt by everyone. Farmers are plowing under crops, breaking eggs, and dumping milk because there are no buyers for it and no way to store It. The Ag industry is hurting, and the youth of our rural Texas communities are hurting right there with It.

Likewise, here in Dallas, the neighborhoods nearest Fair Park have been some of the hardest hit areas by COVID-19. Households with multiple generations of families living under one roof have seen the loss of loves ones. Neighborhoods that rely on the availability of hourly, steady work, have seen furloughs and layoffs on a scale not seen since the Great Depression. It goes without saying, that the youth in those neighborhoods are hurting, too.

Those of us involved with the Big Tex Youth Livestock Auction and Scholarship Program have for decades been the advocates, supporters, and - at times - protectors of the students in our rural communities and our urban Dallas neighborhoods. Make no mistake, even though we are locked down, their world Is still turning, and their needs are still present. They still have livestock projects (most of them began before the pandemic hit) and they still have college aspirations that need support. Our "city mice" and "country mice" (as Susan Brosin so lovingly refers to them) are linked by a common goal: creating better lives for themselves. The members of this committee are all linked by our desire to help them achieve that.

April 30, 2020

Page Two

We cannot let what has happened distract from our goal of helping these kids. We have always prided ourselves on the fact that every single dollar we raise goes to help the students of Texas. We are going to need every one of those dollars this Fall to help make sure these dreams go uninterrupted. This is why our Development Cabinet has decided to plant a flag on July 9 for our Big Tex Youth Livestock Auction Kick-Off, which normally would have been in April. We have also pushed back our Sporting Clay Shoot and Golf Tournament to late Summer to make sure as many people as possible can attend. Make no mistake, from July 9 until Auction Day, it will be a mad dash to raise money. We are compressing six months of work into three, but we cannot let that stop us. Helping these kids is too important.

If history has taught us anything, it is that Americans, especially Texans, are resilient. We will get through this, we will help these kids, and we will make life as close to normal as soon as we can.

God bless each of you and your support of this organization. I cannot wait to see you in person.

Thank you,

Heath

R. Heath Cheek

Auction Chair