

Sure, every college student knows that internships are the foundation for a great career following graduation.

But for Jill Johnson, Cambridge, Ill.; Charlie Hild, Webster City, Iowa; and Lyndi Juri, Sublette, Kan., any ol' internship just wouldn't do. They were after the internships that would be of rock star status, in terms of experience gained, connections made and the preparation developed for their future careers.

Rockin' the Internship

by CHRISTY COUCH LEE

behind the interns

Johnson was raised on a grain and livestock operation in western Illinois. She exhibited Hereford cattle and became involved in livestock judging – competing on the Henry County 4-H livestock judging team, coached by Brian Arnold and Dan Hoge.

She attended Black Hawk College – East Campus, where she competed on the livestock judging team, and then transferred to the University of Illinois, competing on the livestock judging team and majoring in agricultural communications.

“I wanted to stay in agriculture, and the great thing about agricultural communications is that students my age can find such open and diverse careers,” Johnson says.

Johnson completed an internship for Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc. last summer, and this year, she set her sights on an internship with a livestock breed association.

“I had the crops and agronomy experience from last summer, and I wanted to try something with livestock,” she says.

She applied for internships with four livestock breed associations, and received offers from two.

“I decided that since I am a Hereford kid, I would choose the opportunity to work for the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) in Kansas City,” Johnson says.

Juri was raised in southwest Kansas. Although she was raised in town, she was active showing and raising sheep and cattle on her extended family's farm. Today, her family raises registered Angus cattle.

She says she and her dad worked on the cattle operation together, and he always encouraged her to do more – to help with the selection of cattle and bulls and to attend artificial insemination (AI) school.

Her passion for these activities led her to choose a major in



animal science. She first attended Hutchinson Community College where she participated on the livestock judging team, and then she transferred to Kansas State University (K-State). She graduated in May and plans to pursue her master's degree in reproductive physiology from Mississippi State University this fall.

Agricultural advocacy is also important to Juri, for which she's begun a blog to educate consumers about agriculture: tilthecowscome.wordpress.com.

Juri had set her sights on the internship with Heartland Cattle Company, McCook, Neb., during her junior year at K-State. And her dream came true when she was selected to begin an internship in March.

Charlie Hild was raised on his family farm, which consists of managing a small herd of cows, custom feeding hogs and maintaining a 100-ewe flock for club lamb production.

Hild was active in 4-H, FFA, the American Angus Association and the Northern Plains Club Lamb Association. He graduated from Iowa State University (ISU) in May with a degree in animal science.

By attending the ISU agricultural career fair during his freshman and sophomore years, he was introduced to the internships available through TransOva Genetics, Sioux Center, Iowa.

These three college students and recent grads have landed internships in the cattle industry that some only dream about

“I handed them my resume both years, but they wanted third-year students,” Hild says. “By my junior year, they remembered me. I was persistent. And I was fortunate to get an interview and luckily acquired the position.”

Hild completed his first TransOva internship during the summer of his junior year. During his fourth year of college, he interned with Pfizer Animal Health as a Midwest beef pharmaceutical representative intern. He now has begun his second internship with TransOva this summer at their Centerville, Texas, location, and following this internship, he'll be pursuing a career in the agricultural industry.

Each of these interns say their internships have not only met – but exceeded – their expectations.

the rock star life

Johnson is serving as the American Hereford Association (AHA) junior activities summer intern from May through August.

In this position, she maintains contact with the NJHA board of directors to ensure their responsibilities are met for the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in July; coordinates 22 contests for the JNHE; works with state Hereford advisors on the JNHE awards banquet; maintains the NJHA Facebook and Twitter accounts; writes for *Hereford World* magazine; and assists with the coordination of “The Harvest,” which is a Hereford Youth Foundation of America fundraiser event in California in August.

She says she is thrilled to be serving as the AHA junior activities intern for the diversity it provides.

“It’s a great work environment, and the people are great – they’re willing to help with anything,” she says. “The cool thing is, I get to work with people in the records department, Certified Hereford Beef®, the magazine and the junior department. It’s multifaceted and offers so many opportunities that are important.”

Juri served as a Heartland Cattle Company intern from March through June this year. She is one of 50 interns that have worked for Heartland in the past 21 years, she says.

“They’ve had interns from across the U.S. – most of whom are juniors or seniors in college, with some graduate and veterinary medicine students, too,” Juri says. “They understand you’re learning, and everyone is a good teacher. They take the time to explain about injection sites and how to patiently sort cattle – and that’s something I really appreciate.”

Heartland is a heifer development facility. From January through August, they meet all needs for heifers – synchronizing heats, providing heat detection, artificial insemination, ultrasounding and feeding.

Juri says her experience this spring has been greatly beneficial.



Top: As junior activities summer intern for the American Hereford Association, Jill Johnson will coordinate several aspects of the Junior National Hereford Expo in Kansas City, Mo., this summer. **Middle:** Lyndi Juri completed her internship at Heartland Cattle Company, McCook, Neb., where she learned all aspects of working cattle on horseback. **Bottom:** Charlie Hild is in his second year of interning with TransOva Genetics at their Centerville, Texas, location.



Top: TransOva Genetics is allowing Charlie Hild to learn all aspects of the business — from handling embryos and administering shots to cattle, to customer service and sales.

Middle: Jill Johnson (right) maintains a multi-faceted position as junior activities intern for the American Hereford Association, which includes the opportunity to travel to Hereford shows and work with Hereford youth, including Wesley Denton, Blue Rapids, Kan..

Bottom: Lyndi Juri (left) assisted with freeze branding during her months interning at Heartland Cattle Company.

“I’ve gotten to do some AI work, and we’ve learned everything from pre-breeding exams, freeze branding and ultrasounding,” she says. “I had no idea there was this much involved, prior to coming here. It’s really been almost mind-boggling in a very good way, the amount of things I’ve learned. It’s definitely exceeded my expectations.”

On a typical day, Juri began heat detection at 7 a.m. She would work in the breeding barn from 9 a.m. to noon, assisting with the breeding of 60-120 heifers daily. After lunch, they would perform needed injections and begin breeding again at 4 p.m. After breeding, she would heat check until darkness set in – typically 9 p.m. And the next day, the routine began again.

Juri believes her internship experience has prepared her greatly for her graduate studies this fall.

“It’s great to know that everything I’ve learned, I’ll be able to apply either in my own herd, or in working with other producers,” she says. “The people I’ve worked with have it down to a science. It’s neat knowing I’ve worked with experts who know exactly what they’re doing.”

Entering his second internship with TransOva, Hild is excited to expand on the knowledge he gained during his first tour of duty.

During his first internship, Hild says he gained a great knowledge of TransOva as a company and the reproductive cycle of a cow. Working chute-side with veterinarians, Hild spent much time assisting with flushing cows, handling and thawing embryos and giving epidurals to recipient cows.

“Also, throughout the summer, we were assigned a certain ranch on which we did homework and took photos,” he says. “We were asked to identify what services they use with TransOva and develop an idea on how we could improve the relationship or services TransOva offers that customer.”

Above all of this great experience, Hild says he most enjoys working side-by-side with producers.

“They’re the backbone of the whole industry,” he says. “I don’t know of any better people to talk to about where the industry is going, and I try to pick their brains as much as they let me. They’re the most genuine people in the world – out in the middle of the country, raising cattle.”

This summer, Hild is looking forward to being a part of the TransOva team, once again.

“You get a family-team feeling at TransOva,” he says. “I’m excited to become a member of the team again, on a more advanced level. I hope I can take it a step further this year.”

Although the benefits have been amazing, these three say some challenges arise with any internship experience.

the challenges of the experience

Johnson says the biggest adjustment of her internship was moving to a large, unknown city, on her own.

“I had a couple of days to get finished with school, get packed and move to a strange city by myself – it was a bit intimidating,” she says. “A lot of kids want to say close to home and not move. But, I hope that doesn’t hold anyone back from achieving their goals.”

In addition, learning the association's computer system has been a learning experience, Johnson says.

"Anything new that you haven't had experience with can be intimidating," she says. "Don't be afraid to ask for help – everyone has been there, at one point in time."

Juri says her greatest challenge of her internship with Heartland was to learn how to work with different groups of cattle.

"There were 4,000 heifers there, when my internship was ending," she says. "They all came from different owners – some have been handled by horseback, others by foot. It was really important to implement low-stress handling. I've been forced to go outside of my box and work more hands-on with the heifers."

Hild says, having worked with his family for the majority his life, adjusting to having a non-family supervisor was a great adjustment of his internship experience.

"The only people I had worked for, before my internships, were my dad and family," he says. "Getting into an environment to work for someone else is a positive experience. It's great to work for someone else and have responsibilities."

The benefits are great and the challenges are few in these internships. But, the key to experiencing these highs and challenges is to get the internship, in the first place. The first step, of course, is to ace the application.

acing the audition

Johnson says, although internship applications can sometimes be up to five or six pages, she recommends keeping your resume to one page.

"The organizations are getting so many applications and resumes, so keeping them at one page – especially for an internship – is good," she says.

Playing up work experience that may apply to your desired internship, and noting leadership within clubs and activities is also a benefit, she says.

And, without a doubt, proofread your application and resume, Johnson says. Then, do it again.

"Read the application, then read it again," Johnson says. "Make it cohesive – the fonts should be the same style and size. Headers, page numbers and your name on each page are also important, in case your application

gets accidentally separated."

And, she says, make sure you have someone else look it over – to catch little errors and to provide their opinion.

Once the application has caught their eye, then it's time to wow them with the interview.

making the pitch

Johnson says confidence is key during an internship interview.

"You must be confident in yourself," she says. "If you have certain strengths, play those up during the interview process. And, if you have certain weaknesses, talk about how you can work against those during your internship with the organization."

Hild agrees.

"If you enter the interview with a positive attitude, it shows," he says. "Also, be confident. No one wants to hire someone who is wishy-washy. Make good eye contact, give a firm handshake, be pleasant and appear to be confident. That's the type of person they're looking to hire."

Johnson says preparation before the interview can help you stand apart from your competition.

"It doesn't hurt to practice," she says. "With every interview I've done, I feel like I've been over-prepared."

Hild says researching the organization before your interview can also set you apart from the competition.

"Do your homework," he says. "Talk to someone about the most recent work they're doing. The interviewers find that pretty impressive when you take the time to do the research."

And, Johnson says, don't be afraid to provide additional information that the interviewer may not ask, if you believe it can give you an edge.

"If you've done something interesting that may give you an extra edge on your competition, share it," she says. "And, always find a question to ask the interviewer about the organization. For example, ask why he or she likes working there. And, of course, be fun, confident and yourself. Don't be scared."

Taking the time to prepare for the application and interview can lead to

benefits of an internship of your dreams.

the big payoffs

Johnson believes internships are important for the networking they provide.

"Everyone talks about the job market being so bleak," she says. "The more people you know and the more experience you have is just as valuable as the institution you are graduating from. There's nothing better for your future than an internship."

Juri agrees – networking and making contacts is a critical benefit of internships.

"Building those relationships with people from the agricultural industry is invaluable," she says. "Also, you learn the most important skills for your future career during your internship – not in the classroom."

Hild says internships are important, not only for allowing you to learn what you enjoy, but also what you don't.

"You can try different things, and learn if you'd really like to do something," he says. "If you don't like it, you don't have to spend several years after graduation doing it as your job. And, on the other hand, you may discover things you never knew you'd like."

Juri recommends high school and college students develop relationships with mentors who can help you seek out internship opportunities and guide you through your career path.

"You need a good relationship with other people who serve as mentors," she says. "It could be an advisor at school, your cooperative extension service agent or your judging coach. These people know you well and can help you get on the road you should be on."

And, Hild recommends high school students begin focusing on grades now.

"First things first: you have to take care of schoolwork, because if you don't have the GPA to get into college, it's never going to happen," he says. "Also, you must begin getting involved in clubs and activities. It's okay to have a 4.0 GPA, but you also need to be involved – finding the balance between getting involved, getting good grades and making connections in the industry."

Seeking out and landing amazing internships can be a challenge. But, as these three students and graduates can tell you – the payoffs of landing that rockin' internship are worth the sacrifices made.