

Rickreall woman places at farm meet

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

RICKREALL — In 2009, Jenny Freeborn watched as the final four competitors in the National Youth Farmers & Ranchers Discussion Meet worked together to propose solutions to challenges facing farmers.

Watching from the audience, she made it her goal to be on that stage someday.

The discussion meet is held at the American Farm Bureau Federation convention each year, and in 2018, Freeborn achieved her goal. Not only did she make the final round, but placed second in the competition, which took place during the convention in Nashville Jan. 5 through 10.

Freeborn is the chairwoman of the Oregon Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee, a group within OFB representing members between the ages of 16 and 35.

In joining OFB leadership, she's following in family tradition.

Her father, Dean Freeborn, is an OFB board member, and her sister, Kathy Hadley, served as YF&R chairwoman in the past.

Two years ago, Hadley made it to the Sweet 16 round of the competition. That's where Freeborn believed her run representing Oregon would end.

Hearing her name announced as a final four competitor, Freeborn said she was shocked.

"It's just about every emotion you can possibly feel all at once. It really is. It's really exciting and very rewarding," she said. "You get a lot of support, not just from your own state, but all the other farm bureaus. That's really cool how Farm Bureau really is a family."

She had actual family on her side, too.

Freeborn said her sister texted her early in the morning before the final round. She was up, unable to sleep. Hadley stayed up the rest of the night with her, keeping her focused



Jolene Guzman/Itemizer-Observer
Jenny Freeborn with her dog Wrangler. She will receive a new tractor for placing second in the discussion meet.

and relaxed before the competition.

Discussion meets are not debates. Competitors are not trying to out-do each other's answers, but build on each other's thoughts to find the best solution. Freeborn said the competition model mimics the deliberations that would happen at a board meeting.

"You gather information and you have thoughts and ideas to share, and then the four people that discuss work

together collaboratively to come up with solutions or ideas," Freeborn said. "That's one of the things I think I like the most about it. It's not designed to be contentious."

While she spent weeks preparing, Freeborn said the discussion meet taught her a lot about topics and challenges facing farmers — and she believes some good ideas came out of the deliberations.

"There's always something that comes up a discussion meet that you hope someone

in the audience is writing down," she said.

Freeborn said she's the "off-farm kid" in her family, meaning she isn't helping run the farm her family has worked for three generations, but she's still connected to farming through her job.

She specializes in farm, ranch and equine insurance at Pacific Risk Management in Salem.

"I absolutely love that job because I can use all of my background that I grew

up with, all of my skills and knowledge and ability to help farmers with something that's not real fun," she said. "Nobody wants to deal with insurance."

Freeborn will remain active in Farm Bureau through her role with the YF&R Committee, a post she was elected to in December.

"I hope that our organization continues to grow and bring new people in, especially on the young farmer side," she said.

Unemployment rate unchanged

Itemizer-Observer staff report
SALEM — Oregon's unemployment rate was essentially unchanged at 4.1 percent in December from 4.2 percent in November. Oregon's unemployment rate was the same as the U.S. unemployment rate, which was also 4.1 percent in December. The state's annual average unemployment rate for 2017 was 4.0 percent, which was Oregon's lowest annual average unemployment rate since comparable records began in 1976.

In December, Oregon's nonfarm payroll employment grew by 14,700 jobs, following a revised loss of 300 jobs in November.

Monthly gains were concentrated in two industries that bounced back from weaker hiring patterns in the summer, as leisure and hospitality added 4,400 jobs in December and professional and business services added 3,000. Three other industries added at least 1,000 jobs in December: manufacturing (+2,400 jobs), construction (+1,600), and health care and social assistance (+1,000). No major industry cut jobs substantially in December.

Since December 2016, total nonfarm payroll employment grew by 48,400 jobs, or 2.6 percent. This is near the rate of growth experienced throughout 2016 and well into mid-2017. While the jobs reports in late 2017, which covered the August through November data, were indicating a slowdown in Oregon's economic expansion, the strong jobs reading in December reflects a return to robust growth.

Over the most recent 12 months, gains were most rapid in construction, which added 8,800 jobs, or 9.4 percent. Next in line was leisure and hospitality (+8,900 jobs, or 4.4 percent), followed by private educational services (+1,400 jobs, or 4 percent). Several major industries expanded by close to 3 percent: health care and social assistance (+7,200 jobs, or 3.1 percent), financial activities (+2,900 jobs, or 3 percent), and professional and business services (+6,600 jobs, or 2.8 percent). Meanwhile, two industries changed employment by less than 1 percent: government (+2,300 jobs, or 0.7 percent) and wholesale trade (-200 jobs, or -0.3 percent).

DROP 200 POUNDS

Without Going To The Gym!

Get rid of your old, heavy furnace and replace it with a new high-efficiency system from Home Comfort.

24

Emergency
Service

Dave Lemnos
PREMIER DEALER
LENNOX

HOME COMFORT INC

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

Keeping Our Customers Comfortable Since 1954

CB#113253

503.623.2341

WWW.HOMECOMFORTINC.COM