

Young farmers thrive at Alpenrose Dairy's 4-H program

By Jillian Daley
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All four aspects of 4-H's symbolic clover: Head, Heart, Hands and Health are thriving at a local 4-H program.

The 4-H Discovery Farm at Alpenrose Dairy in Southwest Portland hosted its first spring learning camp last month, and a summer learning camp is imminent.

Activities include animal husbandry and tending a new garden. Young gardeners will donate the produce to a local food bank.

Lisa Battan launched the Discovery Farm Club in 2010 because she wanted her daughters to gain experience for their dream careers in agriculture and animal science.

Battan later made her club more focused, calling it Hens and Hares, and Discovery Farm shifted from the name of the club to the name of the place.

Two clubs are coalescing this spring: Ewetopia, which focuses on sheep and goats; and Cloverbuds, which is for children in kindergarten to third grade.

"This is about engaging youths in an opportunity to learn, be responsible and take on leadership positions," said Battan, whose club has 23 members.

Club sizes range from four to 60 members, depending on how many leaders are available to manage a

group, said Pat Willis, an Oregon State University Extension Service 4-H faculty member. The university administers all 4-H groups in Oregon.

To help hire teen counselors for the summer learning camp, Willis said he is applying for a \$2,000 Oregon State University 4-H Foundation Innovative Program Grant.

Also, 4-H officials are discussing creating a zoology program for teens in ninth to 12th grades, he said.

All 4-H clubs' curriculum centers on teaching children healthy living as well as science and civic responsibility.

Clubs may concentrate on many topics, such as raising animals, foods and nutrition, environmental science, computer science and Lego robotics.

Southwest Portland is a region that lacks the agricultural traditions other areas possess, so it can be difficult to generate interest in 4-H, Willis said.

Alpenrose's owners are helping get local youth interested by providing space at their dairy, free of charge. "Alpenrose has been great for us," Willis said.

Located on 52 acres along Southwest Shattuck Road, Alpenrose processes raw milk trucked in from area farms. Products include its own milk and ice cream and ice cream for Baskin-Robbins, for which the dairy holds the Northwest regional contract.

The Discovery Farm occupies the Alpenrose barn, which previously was home to a few horses and ponies



Lisa Battan feeds the pigs at the 4-H Discovery Farm at Alpenrose Dairy. (Post photo by Jillian Daley)

belonging to the dairy owners' family.

Residents now are a combination of 4-H and Alpenrose animals: a cow, two pigs, a donkey, three ponies, two horses, three sheep, three goats, about 12 chickens, a turkey, three rabbits and a flock of ducks.

Aiding 4-H is typical of Alpenrose's long-time community outreach efforts, said Tracey Cadonau McKinnon, Alpenrose communications and events coordinator.

Alpenrose, established in 1916, for decades has welcomed the public to its baseball fields, opera house, bicycle racing track, quarter midget racing track and Dairyville, a replica of a

western frontier town.

"My grandpa started the dairy, and since it started, that's just been the big thing is giving back to the community," Cadonau McKinnon said.

She said 4-H has returned the favor. Last December, 4-H helped revive Christmas at Dairyville, a tradition that had been absent for several years.

"We're all about the community and giving back to kids, and that's really what 4-H stands for, too," Cadonau McKinnon said.

For more information on 4-H Discovery Farm, call Liz Smith at 503-245-5070 or email her at smithe3@onid.orst.edu.

