

4-H program still strong in Josephine County

Jason McMillen
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4-H has been around since the late 1800s and was created because researchers found that adults in the farming community were resistant to new agricultural development methods. Instead of directly making a connection with adults they appealed to children who would share their experiences with their family or carry the knowledge for later in life if they became a farmer themselves.

About 200 kids in Josephine County are participating this year in a program that aims to teach youth how to raise market animals; specifically beef, sheep, swine and goat to sell at auction at the Josephine County Fair. "Our program focus is youth development," Sue Hunt said before continuing on, "We use the kids' interest in animals to get them into the program." 4-H, with this developmental mission in mind, teaches youth via hands on techniques in the subjects of health, science, agriculture and citizenship.

"The kids who are interested, and want to raise a market animal of those four species, then raise that animal to hopefully sell at auction for ultimately someone to eat," Hunt said. However, participants can also choose to donate the animal to one of many philanthropic organizations in town. The animal auction is held on the last day of the fair on Saturday, Aug. 19. It starts at 10 a.m. for beef, goats and sheep then swine are auctioned after lunch. The judges who rate the youth's market animals are hired from around the state and are cycled out after two years.

The youth get to keep the money from the auction but are charged fees to cover the costs of the program. Participants are only allowed to auction one animal at any given fair but for the ambitious young entrepreneur there are auctions twice a year so, at maximum, two animals can be sold a year.

"Swine's the biggest one," Hunt said with regard to the most popular animal to raise, "It's been around the longest and it's not as expensive as beef to get into and feed out." However, according to Hunt,

goats are up and coming because they are the least expensive market animal to start and maintain. This year will be 4-H's third year with goats as a choice for the program. "It's a Middle Eastern food for the most part but it's becoming more popular," Hunt said of goat meat before further explaining, "There's a lot of Hispanic food that's made with goat too so I think as those populations grow and migrate throughout the state we'll see a much larger number of those animals being sold. Particularly when people learn how to use them and cook them."

Another area related to raising market animals is judging them for which 4-H also has a program. On the topic Hunt said, "We have a team of kids that like to compete so they learn how to judge livestock then they go around to the different county fairs and they take part in those livestock judging contests and then ultimately they end up at state fair. The winning team gets to go to national livestock judging,"



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Sierra Ferry and her second place hog "Vienna" during the 2016 Josephine County Fair.

Oregon seeing decrease in sports officials

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Over the last five years the number of officials qualified and able to oversee high school sports games have decreased 16 percent and the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) and Oregon Athletic Officials Association (OAOA) are beginning to cancel games, mostly at the sub-varsity levels, because of the shortage. Jack Folliard, long-time official and executive director of the OAOA, gave some insight as to why this is happening and what can be done about the problem.

"I think that most people think there are a variety of reasons, not necessarily in this order, but society has changed such that people are really busy with their jobs and their

families. It takes a lot of time to be an official," Folliard said before continuing on, "Another reason is frankly that officials are being abused more by spectators than in the past. I think it's a cultural thing." Furthermore, Folliard suggested that those who are interested in becoming an official have a "thick skin," or in plain terms, a mentality tough enough to ignore disrespectful spectators. Folliard went on to explain that coaches at the high school level are generally respectful and they have ways of disciplining the ones who are not but officials have no way of controlling the vulgar enthusiasm of the spectators.

"There's quite a bit of training," Folliard said of the requirements necessary for becoming an official. Oregon has 150 local associations and they do all the training within

their association. Generally, for those who are interested, it's a four to six week program which, according to Folliard, is a great program with lots of hands on learning and mentorship. Folliard further added that previous experience in the sport is recommended but just because you've played the sport in the past doesn't automatically qualify you for official duty.

In total, registration and other fees amount to \$50-80 but after that comes the cost of uniforms and other necessary equipment. Softball and baseball, according to Folliard, is the most expensive sport to start officiating because of umpire padding and other equipment. Despite this, he also mentioned that associations tend to have hand-me-down equipment which can help a fledgling official get started.

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