

## YOUTH LIVESTOCK AUCTION

# NEAR \$500K MARK

Umatilla County Fair's Youth Livestock Auction broke records in 2015, but this year could reach an even greater milestone.

The auction, which is comprised of kids from local 4-H and FFA chapters, brought in \$494,407 in gross sales from 287 animals during last year's auction. That surpassed 2013's figure of \$434,055 from 274 animals. Hogs, lambs and steers made up the majority of animals sold in 2015, with a handful of goats, rabbits and poultry purchased as well.

For many kids who enter, the fair auction is the culmination of a year's work spent raising an animal and getting it ready for sale. Participants begin animal weigh-ins as early as March and spend each day of the fair exhibiting their animals in preparation for the Saturday auction.

Based on last year's earnings, there's plenty of incentive for kids to participate. It also helps when businesses encourage the efforts of the kids, according to Gay Newman, vice-chair of Umatilla County Fair.

"The community supports these kids because most of them become future leaders," Newman said. "We're very fortunate that this community supports kids tremendously."

Newman estimates 90 percent of kids who sell an animal at the auction put their earnings towards a college education, while the others use it to become farmers.

"I know a lot of kids who have funded their college (expenses) with this program," Youth Livestock Auction superintendent Marie Linnell said.

Linnell's son, Brady, is putting his money toward college at Colorado State University, where he'll go just days after participating in his last youth auction. Last year his 1,357-pound steer, which sold for \$5.20 per pound, earned the most money of any steer at the auction.

The participant age generally ranges from fourth-through 12th-graders. In addition to direct earnings from the sale of an animal, kids involved in 4-H and FFA programs increase their chances of getting scholarships, Linnell said.

"It's kind of a big picture thing," she said. "When it comes to applying for scholarships, not only can they speak well... They've got community service. They're well-rounded kids."

When the fair rolls around in August, organizers of the auction can only guess how much money will be brought in.

Linnell said between 290 and 300 animals will be auctioned off. This includes a record 45 steers, up from 31 last year. Based on the numbers this year, the Youth Livestock Auction has a good chance of reaching \$500,000 in gross sales. But as they saw last year, it takes a huge effort from everyone involved — bidders, auctioneers, organizers and participants — to break a record.

"Sometimes we look at that record and say, 'We're not sure how that happened,'" Linnell said.

The 4-H/FFA Youth Livestock Auction will start at 10 a.m. August 13 in Rankin Pavilion.



EO file photos

**Above: Amanda Barron shows her pig during the 2014 Umatilla County Fair Youth Livestock Auction in the Rankin Pavilion.**

**Right: Lydia Hurty, Stanfield, walks her pig back into the pen area after auctioning it off during the 2014 Umatilla County Fair Youth Livestock Auction.**