

FULL SLATE OF YOUTH SHOWCASES RETURN

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
EO Media Group

FFA and 4H were some of the only organizations that were able to preserve their events for the 2020 Umatilla County Fair, but it was still a radical change from its traditional character.

With Umatilla County battling a surge in the COVID-19 pandemic, the fair was forced to cancel most of its events and activities and move FFA and 4H activities online. Although students could still auction off their livestock, it was adults who had to showcase them for potential bidders.

Anna Browne and Mike Sanders, who coordinate 4H and FFA activities, respectively, both said it was a disappointment for children who worked

hard to prepare for the fair only to see it changed for a less-than-ideal format.

But things are looking up for the two organizations in 2021, as many of the COVID-19 have lifted for the fair.

"Everything is back," Browne said.

That means a full slate of cooking, sewing, livestock shows and more are on tap for 2021. Browne said the fair losing a day this year and what she expects to be a large field of participants means 4H will probably begin its activities ahead of the official start of the fair.

Browne said in many communities, 4H chapters lost members as meetings and activities were moved to online. But Eastern Oregon 4H chapters were resilient and didn't see membership drop off.

Browne also said she expects a big year for the 4H and FFA livestock auc-



In the 2020 Modified Youth Livestock show (from left to right): Carter Keys, 11, wrangles his turkey; Emmy Simmons leads her lamb; Nicholas Robbins, 10, leads his steer. Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group, File

tion. Despite its unusual format, Browne said the organizations saw a record year for livestock sales last year as the community turned out to support them. This year, she's hoping the fair's return to its original format also will inspire the community to support students and their ventures in agriculture.

Sanders said FFA students still were proud of what they accomplished in

2020, but there will be an extra layer of pride this year because they can show their livestock themselves.

"This year," he said, "they get to show what they've done."



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