McDowell reins

Urban students embrace rural lifestyle experience

By Steve Tool Wallowa County Chieftain

Eight students from Sunnyside Environmental School in Portland recently completed their Wallowa County stay as part of the 4-H Urban 2 Rural Exchange program with Wallowa County. The purpose of the program is to expose students from both Portland and Wallowa County to life "on the other side."

While some students make repeat visits, Sunnyside students Rebecca Miller-Rondthaler and Adeline Finney are first-time participants in the program. The two spent their Wallowa County stay with ranchers Todd and Angie Nash.

Rondthaler said she wanted to participate in the program last year, but declined for an unusual reason: "I didn't want to miss school. I know it's kind of weird," Rondthaler said with a laugh. She added it was her last chance to participate, so she took the plunge.

The difference in the rural lifestyle appealed to Rondthaler as the two spent the weekend riding horses and attending three brandings. "I branded a cow and gave them vaccines, and we saw a calf



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Two Sunnyside happy campers after a few days on the ranch. From left: Adeline Finney,

being born. I enjoyed it; it was

really fun," Rondthaler said. Finney had an equally good time during her stay. "I came here because I thought it sounded like a fun experience. and I wanted to see what life

Mother's Day weekend!

Both girls said their visit

Todd Nash enjoyed the weekend as well. "I always enjoy having the kids here. Becca and Adeline were very congenial young ladies. They were low maintenance, and we didn't do anything special outside our normal routine, and they really enjoyed it,"

said some of the students believed the ranchers polluted streams and raised water temperatures, overgrazed the land and compacted soils. "We didn't preach to them, we showed them the ranching process and how many thousands of people we feed with our cattle, and they ended feeling different about it," Nash said.

In the end, Nash said the program is about mutual respect. "We can appreciate each other as human beings, and that's all I want out of

FUN HAS NO RESTRICTIONS

2014 PIONEER 700

supreme at derby By Steve Tool Wallowa County Chieftain After the roaring of the crowd subsided and the dust from flying hooves had settled from five days of competition, one man reigned supreme: Wallowa County's Matt McDowell and his horse Lorenzo (regis-

tered name of FM Shine N Tag

Chex). McDowell didn't win

all-around-cowboy at a spring

rodeo, he won the HF Mobster

Open Derby at the "Best Lit-

tle Derby in the West," put on

by the Great Western Reining

the Ford Idaho Horse Park

in Nampa, Idaho, from April

22-26. Exhibitors from as far

away as Colorado, Alberta and

Utah competed in the derby. It

is the first major reining event

to take place in the Pacific

horse trainer. Reining is the

western style equivalent of dressage — the European

style riding events seen in the

Olympics. Reining is based

on the athletics of a working

cow horse. The horse runs a

particular pattern that includes

spins, sliding stops, flying lead

changes, rundowns, circles,

backing and rollbacks. The

horses are judged not only on

the finesse and speed of their

performance, but also on the

subtleness of cues it receives

time national wrestling cham-

pion, still maintains his com-

petitive edge in the reining

world. "This was the biggest

derby ever in the Northwest.

All the guys from Canada

came down, and it was a big,

big show. The competition was just crazy with run after run of

people going full blast with the

dirt flying," McDowell said

with a score of 148.5 with a

two-judge system. His closest

competitor scored 147. "I was

pretty nervous waiting for the

last five horses. I had some

pretty heavy hitters like Shaw-

na Sapergia, an Olympian from

Canada and Jesse Beckley,

McDowell won the event

McDowell, already a two-

from the rider.

with a laugh.

McDowell is a reining

The derby took place at

Horse Association.

Northwest.

Courtesy photo Matt McDowell on reining Lorenzo, who is coming to a sliding stop while competing at the Cactus Reining Classic in Scottsdale, Ariz. earlier this year.

another Canadian champion coming up behind me. I ended up holding on for the win, so it

was fun," McDowell said.

McDowell said he appreciated the proximity of the derby as most big reining shows take place in the Southwest. "We're happy with this event, we only have to go four hours and we're happy to have big money to go for," McDowell said. His winning ride on Lorenzo garnered \$5,400, a trophy saddle, two Lawson bronze sculptures, two belt buckles and two trophy picture frames.

Other team members who contributed were training assistant Wyatt Shetler as well as Kazzie Dawson, Denny Dawson, Dustie Pickard and Jerry Winegar. McDowell also won the Novice Horse Open circuit on Surprise Ima Chick, also owned by Tamarack Ranch.

Although McDowell raises and trains his own horses, as well as those of others, his main client is Tamarack Ranch, owned by Suzy Simar (pronounced See-mar) of Texas, who also owns Lorenzo. McDowell met Simar while she was a client of his parents, who once owned the Eagle Cap Pack Station. "She really loves horses and has nine of her horses in training," Mc-Dowell said.

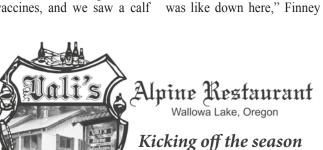
Simar is currently building Tamarack Ranch, which includes a large riding arena, at Walker Lane in Joseph. Although McDowell currently takes outside horses, he will work exclusively for Tamarack Ranch when the

finished in a year.

McDowell said he'll always train his own horses as well. "My kids show, and my family shows and it's really important to me. This is a big deal for my family and they have to be a part of it. We'll always have a place to train our own horses.

McDowell's children are following in his boots. His son, Mason, won the 13-and-under reining class and tied for the win in Short Stirrup class at the

rancher Todd Nash, and Rebecca Miller-Rondthaler.



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poured a good dose of reality on their preconceived notions of ranch life in general. The girls intend to participate in the future.

Nash said.

Early in the program, Nash



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