Kansas 4-H members gear up for county fairs

Local fairs highlight year’s worth of work for many youth

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The Grand ‘Ole party that is county fair season in Kansas has begun, and a Kansas State University youth development specialist says the state’s 4-H members are rolling out the welcome mat.

Beth Hinshaw, a youth development specialist for community vitality in southeast Kansas, said 4-H exhibits are a highlight of many county fairs.

“Our young people love it when people from the community come and see their projects,” Hinshaw said. Kansas 4-H members have been preparing their fair exhibits since last fall in one of nearly three dozen projects areas.

“One of the great things about 4-H is that we help people find their spark; we help them find a project that they just love,” Hinshaw said “They work hard to master that project and sometimes it even leads them to a professional career.”

Depending on the size of the fair, dozens or even hundreds of 4-H projects will be on display at the county level. Youth who earn a state fair blue or purple ribbon are eligible to then show their project at the Kansas State Fair in early September.

Some of the projects include making rockets, furniture or clothing; photography; growing flowers or vegetables; caring for livestock; baking; painting and many more.

“If people are thinking, ‘you know, 4-H might be something my family is interested in,’ then the local 4-H fair is the perfect place to go because you get to see so many of the possibilities,” Hinshaw said.
“I think the other thing you see is young people having fun. I can remember, from my own 4-H experience as a youth, getting my projects judged. That was great, but some of my best memories of the fair are just all of the fun I had with my friends.”

Hinshaw said many 4-H youth also are involved in leadership at the local fair, including helping with project judging, working in the concession stand and more.

“Sometimes what we see on the news about young people is negative,” she said. “But a quick walk through a county fair or a 4-H fair somewhere really helps you feel good about what it is that young people are learning and the direction they are going.”

A complete listing of county fairs in Kansas – sorted either by date or alphabetically by county – is available online from the Kansas 4-H office. You can also contact local extension offices in Kansas for information about the county fair.

“All not only will you see 4-Hers and the great work they’ve done this year, but you’ll probably see your neighbors and friends at the county fair, as well,” Hinshaw said. “And that just makes for a great time for everyone.”

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Kansas county fairs (listing, by date), www.kansas4-h.org/events-activities/fairs/county-fairs/index.html

Kansas 4-H Youth Development, www.kansas4-h.org

K-State Research and Extension local offices, www.krse.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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