

NMCGA ON THE TRAIL

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Taylor Riggins

New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association

Office Phone: 505-247-0584

Email: taylor@nmagriculture.org

A Night at the County Fair

County fair season in communities all across the state began this week. From late July to October people of all ages, backgrounds and interests will come together to showcase talent, enjoy food, and see a year of hard work come to fruition. This is a great opportunity for the agriculture community to grow, educate and showcase its best!

New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service and youth organizations like 4-H and FFA cultivate opportunities for every member of the family to be involved in the fair. There are several classes to showcase talents as a member of these youth organizations including: animal science, horticulture, engineering science, creative arts, and home economics. For those who are still a kid at heart, the adult open division includes: farm crops, baked and canned goods, clothing, needlework, arts and crafts, and photography.

“4-H and Extension touches 650,000 New Mexicans every year! That's one-third of our great state. 4-H is one of many organizations that children and even adults can take part in, one which holds a huge piece of my heart”, said Tatum O’Toole, former State 4-H President.

The livestock barn holds a range of animals including cattle, horses, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, llamas and alpacas. Every animal is accompanied and cared for by a hardworking youth. These showmen work all year feeding, watering and grooming their animals to lead them through the show ring for a chance to make the sale. The

Junior Livestock sale benefits the future of these showmen through the generosity of bidders, scholarships, trophy buckles, and awards given for showmanship.

“As the largest youth organization in the world, the goal of 4-H is to develop citizenship, leadership, responsibility and life skills through experiential learning programs with a positive youth development approach,” said O’Toole. “New Mexico alone has more than 30,000 youth from ages 5-19 that participate in citizenship leadership and many other various projects areas.”

If you find yourself lacking in weekend plans, a trip to the local fair is sure to be a blast. There you can also indulge in deliciously fried foods like funnel cakes and corn dogs. Better yet, try out the green chile cheeseburger! You can also spend your time catching a few stomach-dropping carnival rides, listen to live music and attend the occasional rodeo or goat roping. Community involvement is huge surrounding fair event. You can often find local business owners selling their wares or see your classmates at the face painting booth.

“One of the best things about 4-H and New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service is that they have a huge outreach and are all about teaching and sharing the message of New Mexico agriculture,” said O’Toole. “The agricultural community is truly a family that supports each other. In the words of 4-H, working to make the best better.”

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