

Extension Education
Beth Crandall News Column
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Being a 4-H/FFA Kid

By Beth Crandall

The Juab County Fair is a special time for our community. It's when we are able to come together, enjoy each other's company and celebrate accomplishments. The County Fair is a time when the youth in our community are able to show off the projects that they have been working on all summer, or perhaps all year. It is a time of year that we all love, we look forward to, and although we are exhausted when it was over, we wish it would last longer.

This wonderful week would not be possible without our Fair Board, Junior Fair Board, Livestock Committee and volunteers. These people do all of the behind the scenes work to ensure that the fair is successful and running smoothly. This was my first Juab County Fair as an Extension faculty member and I honestly was not sure how fair week was going to go. The Fair Board, Junior Fair Board, Livestock Committee members and volunteers did a fantastic job of organizing and running all of the various activities at the county fair. I know it was a stressful week for them and I'd like to commend everyone on a job well done. I am so grateful for their dedication to our community and to making sure our County Fair is a memorable, positive experience.

During fair week, as I watched all of the youth showing and selling their livestock, it brought back the memories of when I was a kid showing my livestock. The experiences that I gained through 4-H and FFA had a huge impact on making me the person that I am today. I know for parents this is an exhausting time of year and perhaps you wonder if it is worth your time.

The experiences that your kids are gaining from their 4-H and FFA projects is irreplaceable. We are often asked about and perhaps even verbally attacked because we are part of 4-H and/or FFA. I personally think that the best way to respond to this is to share our story. It is our job as 4-H/FFA members and agriculturalists to combat any ignorance or misunderstandings with first-hand experiences.

So, let's talk about what 4-H/FFA is really about. It's about teaching youth to finish what they start. It's about teaching them to work as a team and how to be an impactful, positive leader. It's about teaching our kids to take responsibility not only for themselves, but for another living, breathing creature. It's about learning valuable financial management and book keeping skills at a young age. It's not about winning grand champion, it's about the work and sense of accomplishment that comes from raising that animal. It's not about the project, it is about what the kid learns from the project. Stock shows give youth the opportunity to learn the process of raising a food animal for its original purpose, to go to market.

Through this learning process, they gain an understanding of genetics, animal health and nutrition. They learn to cope with loss and understand how life is made. These kids are our future farmers, ranchers, scientists, engineers, doctors and so much more! 4-H and FFA programs give our youth first-hand experiences to real-life situations. I am grateful that you allow your youth to be part of these wonderful organizations. Although they may not say it right now, they are also thankful that you push them to participate. Trust me, they'll thank you later.