

Fair Time Is Here—What Are You Entering?

Christi Nicholls, 4-H Program Coordinator

It's that time of year again! County Fair is just around the corner, and if you're anything like me, you're probably wondering how summer has gone by so fast. Before we know it, the Juab County Fair will be here, the exhibit building will be full, and we'll be walking around looking at all of the amazing things our community has created.

One of my favorite parts of the fair is seeing what our youth enter. I love walking through the exhibit building and recognizing projects from our 4-H clubs and camps, but I also love seeing the things kids have created on their own.

Sometimes I think we get caught up in believing that a fair entry needs to be perfect. It doesn't!

Did your child make something at a 4-H camp this summer? Enter it. Did they take a great picture while your family was on vacation? Enter it. Did they bake cookies, sew something, grow a vegetable, create a piece of art, build something, crochet, do leatherwork, or try a new craft? Enter it!

Why?

Because entering something in the county fair is about so much more than getting a ribbon.

One of the things we talk about a lot in 4-H is **mastery**. Mastery happens when youth have the opportunity to learn a skill, practice it, make mistakes, try again, and eventually become better at it. A county fair project is a great example of that.

Think about everything that happens before a project ever makes it to the exhibit building. A young person has to come up with an idea, learn how to do it, gather their supplies, work on it, possibly mess it up, figure out how to fix it, and—maybe the hardest part—actually finish it!

Those are some pretty important life skills.

Then comes judging.

Of course, everyone hopes for a blue ribbon, purple ribbon, or maybe even Best of Show. There is nothing wrong with being excited about those accomplishments! But I hope we can also teach our kids that the ribbon isn't the most important part of the experience.

The important part is what they learned along the way.

Instead of only asking, “What ribbon did you get?” maybe we can also ask, “What did you learn?” “What are you most proud of?” or “What would you do differently next time?”

Those conversations help our youth understand that success isn't always about being the best. Sometimes success is trying something you've never done before. Sometimes it's sticking with something when it gets frustrating. And sometimes success is simply finishing what you started.

That is Positive Youth Development in action.

The fair is also a great place to find your next project. Take your kids through the exhibit building and let them look around. You never know what might catch their attention. Maybe they see a photograph and decide they want to learn photography. Maybe it's a cake, a quilt, a woodworking project, a flower arrangement, or something completely different.

That little spark of “I want to try that” is exactly what 4-H is all about.

So, as you are getting ready for the Juab County Fair this year, look around your house. Check the kids' rooms. Look at the projects they brought home from 4-H. Think about what they have made, grown, baked, built, sewn, photographed, painted, or created this year.

And then **ENTER IT!**

It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be the best. It just needs to represent something they tried, learned, and accomplished.

I'll be looking forward to walking through the exhibit building and seeing what Juab County has created this year.

And remember—the ribbon is great, but the kid who learned they can do hard things is even better.

See you at the fair!