

USU Bastian Agricultural Center Opens New Youth Livestock Barn

Dennis Hinkamp

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Utah State University Extension celebrated the recent opening of the Youth Livestock Barn at the Bastian Agricultural Center in South Jordan. It expands opportunities for young people to experience agriculture, develop life skills, and serve their communities.

Josh Dallin, the center's executive director, said the project began in 2022 when three young people approached the center because local animal ordinances prevented them from raising livestock in their backyards.

The center initially accommodated the three youth and six animals in abandoned horse stalls, but by 2026, the program had grown to serve nearly 80 youth. As participation continued to grow, the program quickly outgrew the limited space available in the center's existing horse stalls. Temporary pens and other available areas were used to accommodate additional animals, but it became clear that a permanent facility was needed to safely support the growing number of youth and livestock.

The new Youth Livestock Barn was created specifically to meet that need, providing dedicated space where 4-H and FFA members can raise and care for project animals while receiving hands-on agricultural education and mentorship.

"This barn was built for you," Dallin told the participating youth in the audience. "We're not just cutting a ribbon on another building. We're opening a place where young people are going to learn how to work."

A central component of the program is its partnership with the Bastian Family Foundation, which purchases the animals raised by participating youth, pays for processing, and donates the resulting meat to help feed families throughout Salt Lake County. The arrangement allows participants to earn money while learning responsibility, animal husbandry, and community service.

"These kids aren't just raising an animal for a ribbon," Dallin said. "They're raising an animal that will eventually help feed a family."

USU Extension Vice President Justen Smith emphasized the importance of 4-H programs in helping young people develop confidence, responsibility, and a sense of belonging.

Smith said the program also provides agricultural education for urban families who may have limited connections to farming and ranching. He expressed hope that similar opportunities could eventually expand throughout the Wasatch Front.

USU President Brad Mortenson highlighted the project as an example of the university's land-grant mission to serve communities through education and outreach.

Mortenson, who grew up on a small farm, said raising animals teaches more than a strong work ethic. It also develops an ethic of care and responsibility that benefits young people throughout their lives.

Jake Anderson, representing the Bastian Family Foundation, described the facility as an extension of the Foundation's commitment to preserving agriculture and creating meaningful educational experiences.

He emphasized that raising livestock teaches young people valuable lessons about patience, perseverance, and responsibility.

"Animals don't take a day off from needing to be fed and cared for," he said.

Also highlighted was the center's partnership with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food through a pollinator program. Hundreds of donated plants are ready to be planted in the coming weeks.

"This is the cleanest this barn is ever going to be," Anderson joked. "So, enjoy it now. Come back in a year. It's going to be even better, even though it's going to be full of manure!"

To learn more about the Center, visit the [Bastian Agricultural Center website](#).

USU Extension celebrated the recent opening of the Youth Livestock Barn at the Bastian Agricultural Center in South Jordan.

Photos by Dennis Hinkamp.

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