

FARM: Enroll today in 4-H

By SHANNA ABATTI, Special to this Newspaper | Posted: Thursday, September 29, 2016
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Enrollment is open throughout the 4-H program year, which begins on July 1st and ends on June 30th. However, to participate in the 2017 California Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta, the main event for most animal projects, members must be enrolled by Nov. 8, 2016. 4-H is a premier source of enjoyable, educational programs to help young people reach their full potential. If your child is between the ages of 5 and 19 and has an interest in rabbits, poultry (which includes chickens, ducks, waterfowl, etc.), cavies, beef, swine, sheep, goats (dairy, pygmy, and market), dairy cattle, horses or dogs they can be a member of the 4-H livestock program.



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Courtesy Photo

We have all seen the kids at the fair dressed in head to toe white adorned by their signature green hat and tie or scarf. For these young people, “going to the fair” in addition to rides, food and fun also means hard work, prizes and learning. These youth members will work countless hours to ensure their animal, whether large or small, is ready for judging.

Animal projects are some of the longest-running and easily identifiable aspects of 4-H, but they are much more complex than what happens in the show ring. Many people may not realize the valuable skills that 4-H’ers receive as a result of participating in these projects.

4-H animal projects help youths learn about the life cycle, growth and feeding of animals. In the process, they learn about animal selection and evaluation, nutrition and feeding, animal health, daily care, reproduction and marketing. Animal projects also help 4-H’ers build or improve upon important life skills including hard work, responsibility, critical thinking and decision-making. 4-H’ers learn leadership skills, communication with others, organizational skills and record keeping.

As part of these programs, young people are encouraged to practice animal welfare and responsibility. 4-H’ers are encouraged to take ownership of their project and be responsible for the animal’s daily care, while receiving oversight from an adult volunteer. 4-H’ers learn how to provide adequate feed, water and shelter to their animal and give the animal opportunities for

normal socialization. As the animal grows, young people can take pride in knowing they helped raise a healthy animal.

Many people think 4-H is just for kids who live on farms — but that's not true! Most cities within Imperial County allow youths to house 4-H animals in their own backyards during the duration of the project period. There are also special loan programs through local banks that youth members may take advantage of to get their project started.

If you are interested in getting involved you will need to contact the 4-H office at 760-352-9474. We will help you choose a club to join and help you through the online registration process. There are 15 active 4-H Clubs across Imperial County, each with their own unique offerings. 4-H clubs have no affiliation with cities, school districts, nor with any religious or political organizations. The meeting place for each club is chosen based on convenience, and you are welcome to join any club that appears to fit your family's needs. For more information on the 4-H youth program please visit <http://ceimperial.ucanr.edu/4h>