

4-H kick-off brings in new excitement

BY VINCENT OSUNA
Staff Writer

Six years ago, only 693 youths made up the 4-H program throughout the Imperial Valley.

Since then, the local youth organization has seen a drastic increase, as a total of 7,282 local 4-H members were accounted for in July.

Playing a notable role in the growth of members has been the promotional events held in recent years, which have amounted to about a 10 percent membership increase each year, said 4-H Program Repre-

sentative Shanna Abatti.

On Saturday, members from all 4-H clubs throughout the county came together at the Imperial Valley Mall food court and held the fourth annual 4-H Kick Off and Spark Fair.

"We've had it prior years, but this has blown it out the water," expressed Abatti.

In years prior, the kick-off event consisted of only two tables set up where those interested can sign up for the youth organization and receive a free movie ticket to Cinemark.

This year's kick-off event

was completely revamped, boasting 20 tables filled with a variety of projects showing what each local club has to offer.

"It is really fun, it's very active. You have to have a lot of time on your hands and get everything done. You have to be very prepared and know what you're talking about," described 4-H member Andrew Angulo on his time displaying his project at the kick-off.

"Before they would just sign up for the free movie and they didn't know what they were getting into."

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LEFT TO RIGHT: 4-H members Abby Hester, 14, Andrew Angulo, 13, and Hannah Cartee, 15, show Jacob Hernandez, 7, and Jazlyn Valles, 6, how to make a balloon project during the fourth annual 4-H Kick Off and Spark Fair at the Imperial Valley Mall in El Centro on Saturday evening. VINCENT OSUNA PHOTO

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"This way, they could see which projects they like and actually want to do," stated 4-H All Stars member Dillian Sanchez on the event.

Dillian, 15, had his project, a smoothie bike, on display. The project was based on showing an example of healthy living. Those on the bike could pedal and a smoothie machine attached to the bike would eventually generate enough power to create a drink.

"My favorite part was getting to meet all the kids and see their reactions to

the bike, the kids were really fun," recalled the 15-year-old, who built the project himself with the help of his sister.

Among Dillian's smoothie bike was a number of other exhibits showcasing hands-on examples of aerodynamics, leadership, cooking, robotics and animal projects, among others.

For the 15-year-old, a project that showed how to create a stress ball out of a balloon was his favorite.

Organized by 4-H members Andrew Angulo, 13, Abby Hester, 14, and Hannah Cartee, 15, the project showed how one could use a straw to put flour into a balloon and create a stress

ball.

The attention-grabbing exhibits that drew in any curious passersby completed the secondary goal of the event.

"We wanted to encourage kids to participate and let them know it's not just animals," explained Abatti, who hoped the kick-off showed that 4-H has numerous activities for all interests, contrary to popular belief.

The fourth annual event also acted as a reminder for previous 4-H members to sign up if they haven't done so already, as the deadline for fair participation is Friday and deadline to join 4-H clubs is November 1.

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