



Salute to FFA Week

Page 8B

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Lampasas Dispatch Record



Sisters encourage FFA involvement

Continued from page 7B

has influenced them significantly in their FFA activities. Their mother, Ronda, never misses a show, either.

LHS agricultural science adviser Dr. Steve Forsythe and ag teacher Wes Harris, Mackenzie and Makayla said, offer valuable help for students who want to become involved in FFA or pursue scholarships related to agriculture.

With speaking events, various skills competitions and leadership development activities, FFA offers opportunities for students who like working with animals as well as for those who don't plan to show livestock, the Martins said.

"Just because you don't show animals doesn't mean you can't be involved," Mackenzie said. "[FFA] teaches you a lot and will help you in the future."

Makayla welcomed other students to learn more about FFA and what it offers.

"Just have fun," she said. "Just talk to the ag teachers. They'll help you get involved."

Community service important to members

Continued from page 7B

FFA members in Lampasas and across the country contribute by envisioning and discovering their talents and goals for a successful future.

FFA members are unique individuals, like the owls of the animal kingdom.

Yes, owls and FFA members are "birds of a feather." As we celebrate National FFA Week in Lampasas Feb. 19-26, let's be proud of their way of life and rich, positive heritage.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Local, state and national FFA programs and activities help members develop public speaking skills, conduct and participate in meetings, manage financial matters, strengthen problems-solving abilities and assume civic responsibilities. Degrees earned at local, state and national levels recognize members' increasing accomplishments.

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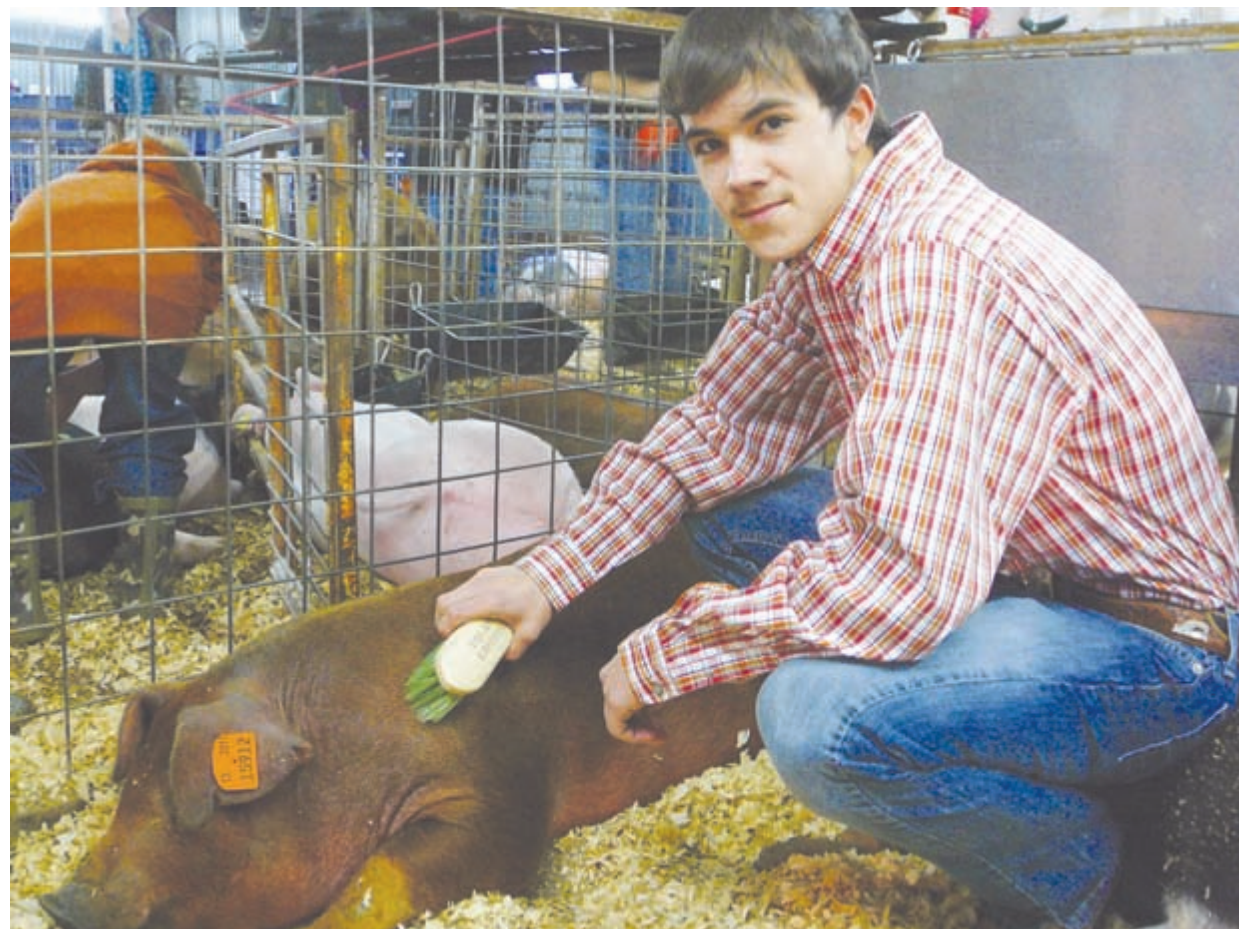


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Joseph Vaillancourt prepares his market hog for the annual youth livestock show.

FFA experience pays off for Lampasas student

By LISA CARNLEY
Staff Writer

The adage "better late than never" definitely applies to Joseph Vaillancourt.

Though the Lampasas High School senior didn't join FFA until his sophomore year, he has made the most of his past few years as part of the organization.

Joseph's interest was piqued several years ago when he met a farmer at a Copperas Cove feed store who explained what Joseph would need to get pigs ready for the show ring.

"He showed us how to take care of them and how to feed them, and I've been doing it ever since," he said.

The senior said he had been interested in FFA, and that's another reason he decided to show pigs.

He also participates in ag co-op, a work-study class to gain experience in the workforce.

Joseph works for Jed Dunning at Sulphur Creek Taxidermy.

And taking care of his pigs keeps him busy for several hours a day, as well, and his results have been good at shows.

In the most recent Lampasas County Youth Livestock Show, Joseph showed his dark OPB to a reserve championship in the division, and soon he will take pigs on the road, heading to major shows across the state including Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio and San Angelo.

"I really enjoy showing. It is a lot of fun," he said. "And it is a good learning experience."

Joseph hopes to use the experiences he gains through

showing animals and processing deer to move into a career as a game warden.

"I wanted to be a police officer, but I am really interested in animals."

Joseph said showing animals really pays off if one works hard at it. "I have learned how to feed and take care of my animals. It takes about two hours' work each day - an hour for feeding and an hour to clean the pens."

"But it can really pay off if you want to win," he said. "And I want to win."

He plans to attend Tarleton State University in Stephenville to study wildlife management and hopes after earning a degree to be accepted into the elite game warden academy.

Meanwhile, Joseph will finish out his senior year traveling to shows in hopes of winning the big prize.

And being in FFA has helped make that possible, he said.

"When I first joined FFA, Wes Harris [agricultural science teacher at LHS] told me pigs are a good place to start showing for someone who has no experience showing."

They can be easy to a point, Joseph added, "depending on how much work you put into it. I put a lot of time and effort in. It's important to me."

Showing animals has taught him a lot, he said. Responsibility and leadership are two of the things he has honed through FFA.

"I think it is a good organization for kids to join. You can get a lot out of it. I did."

Joseph is the son of Joe Vaillancourt, and Brenda and Fredrick Klinger.

Officers listed

Continued from page 6B

cheerleading, basketball and track. After high school, she plans to attend Texas A&M-Corpus Christi to pursue a degree in marine biology.

Noalle Skipper, a Lometa High School sophomore, is the chapter's parliamentary.

The daughter of Kyle and Ronda Walton, she has earned her Greenhand and Chapter degrees, and has competed in ag issues, quiz, floriculture and chapter conducting.

Noalle also is active in basketball and UIL.

She plans to attend college after high school.

Ethan Saunders serves as sentinel for the Lometa FFA Chapter. A junior, he is the son of Scott and Teresa Saunders.

Ethan has earned the Greenhand Degree and received the Beef Production Award. He also shows livestock and plays basketball.

After graduation, Ethan hopes to attend trade school to study mechanics.

Hannah Purser, a Lometa High School senior, is chaplain of her local chapter. The daughter of Connie Burnett, Hannah has competed in radio, public relations, ag communications and chapter conducting.

She has earned the Greenhand, Chapter and Lone Star degrees.

In addition to FFA, Hannah is active in Girl Scouts, basketball, One-Act Play, cross country, track, UIL and her church youth group.

After high school, Hannah plans to attend Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., where she wants to participate in the Fusion ministry and outreach program.

ALUMNI

Agriculture teachers rely on more than 47,000 FFA Alumni members and countless volunteers to help ease the outside commitments of teaching. FFA relies on alumni members for student recruiting, scholarship money, advocacy for agricultural education, aiding in camps, conferences, national FFA conventions and other personal development programs.

Lometa students traveled FFA road together

Continued from page 6B

Conservation Public Speaking, not only serves as chapter president and was the 2009-2010 president of the San Saba District FFA, she also is an Area VII vice president with plans to run for state office this year.

"We had a lot of adversity coming toward us when we began, and we knew we had to work hard," Kylie said. "Now that we are leaving, we are hoping that we have been an example to others in that diligence and hard work really do bring about reward."

"Mr. Barnett was on our case every day," she continued. "He made us angry, he made us laugh, he inspired

us, he made us give more than we ever had given before, and for that, I will always be thankful."

Cassidy feels the Lometa FFA and Barnett have been a valuable asset in her high school career. With Barnett's guidance, the senior has earned three state banners, a \$5,000 scholarship from the State Fair of Texas' Speaking Contest and was a finalist in the State Farm Bureau Free Enterprise Speech Contest, earning a \$1,500 scholarship and a trip to Washington, D.C.

"Considering the disarray our program was in at the beginning of our freshman year, what Mr. Barnett has done is amazing," she said.

"We started our chapter without

officers, and by the end of the year, we had two new state banners on the wall.

"Mr. Barnett is like an extra father to all of us - we know he would do anything for us," Cassidy added. "He has listened when he didn't have to and helped us in everything from writing to math. He's taught me the value of hard work and the real definition of winning. I'm a better person because of the FFA and Mr. Barnett, and for that, I am truly grateful."

The two chapter officers are not the only seniors willing to voice their devotion to the program. Josepha Romero, who serves as chapter

treasurer, has traveled with Barnett down many a highway, competing in FFA events across the state.

"The FFA has done several things for me," she said. "It has made me more independent and a better speaker. Most importantly, it has taught me how to want something, as well as how to go and get it."

Chapter chaplain Hannah Purser echoes Joseph's belief that FFA has evoked personal improvement. "FFA has given me self-confidence, and since it did, I'll use it."

For senior Colt Maldonado, the improvements in the FFA chapter over the past four years are quite obvious. "There is much more involvement in FFA now, as well as the ag department in general," he said.

"I think the kids are actually having fun competing in the competitions that FFA has to offer."

Colt believes FFA has given him both skills to perform his goals and the incentive to follow through.

"FFA has given me valuable skills and techniques that can seldom be learned elsewhere," he said. "It also has allowed me to take these skills and put them to use in competitions and in completing projects."

As the high school FFA careers of the Class of 2011 wind down, Barnett is confident the lessons learned by this class will be carried with them as they move into college.

"I look forward to sending these students out into the world to see what they can do," he said.

"We have prepared them well for the challenges that are ahead, and they have paved a pathway for those to follow behind them. They have laid down the challenges for their younger classmates to follow in their footsteps."

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