

# Your 4-H Update

## Recognition Ceremony rewards youth

**By Katie Clausen**  
For the Plain Talk

The cold weather on Nov. 16 didn't stop the crowd of proud parents, grandparents and kids from coming to the Clay County 4-H recognition event. After all, the 4-Hers have been investing their time and energy into the projects that earned these awards all year long.

"This is our end of the year awards ceremony," organizer Colleen Speakman said "These are awards for things they've been working on all year."

Patches, trophies, and other tokens of acknowledgment were all awarded to 4-H kids who earned high marks on their projects.

4-H allows local youth to be involved in a vast list of project interests. Awards went to youth who had worked on projects from livestock events and agriculture based assignments to art and photography and technology.

The Clay County 4-H center was set up with chairs, and each 4-H group had their turn at the microphone to discuss their projects, their community service involvement, and their accomplishments.

Julie Fallan, who performed introductions and represented the Meckling Livestock group, informed the attendees about their achievements.

"Meckling Livestock had quite a few community service projects last year," Fallan said. "We have a lot of mem-

bers of all ages that have a lot of enthusiasm."

In addition to group leaders presenting their members with awards, Andrew Heine spoke about his 4-H sponsored trip to Washington, D.C.

"I don't think I'd ever go to D.C. without this trip," Heine told the group. "It was a really good opportunity to go."

Heine was selected as a delegate to represent 4-H for Clay County.

"You apply by writing an essay," Heine said. "They send you there because it's a really good leadership camp and you meet with a lot of different leaders from across the U.S."

Heine was impressed by the once in a lifetime opportunity.

"I liked meeting all the people there on the trip," Heine said. "I also liked touring D.C."

Each 4-H group is specifically tailored to the different needs and wants of the kids involved in that group, all while being able to provide a sense of membership and camaraderie for each involved.

"We also got a bunch of new kids who in just a few short months, did fantastic," said Margaret Williams, co-leader of the 4-H group that focuses on dog training and showing. "We've had an incredible year."

4-H relies on sponsorships to help supplement funds. The recognition event was sponsored this year by the Clay County Fair Board,



Vermillion's 4-H Center on High Street held a youth ceremony.

**KATIE CLAUSEN / FOR THE PLAIN TALK**

Clay County Youth Trust Fund, the South Dakota Club Calf Association, South Dakota State Fair Commission, Greenwood Township, Marshall Lundquist Family, Clifford Miller Family, Virginia Johnson, The Randy Jensen Family, the Clay County 4-H Leaders Association, Lucky Trailblazers 4-H Club, Margaret Williams and Franck Schieber, Meckling Livestock 4-H Club, and Bank of the West.

Kathy Heles, who spoke on behalf of the Jolly JJ's group, recounted a large list of community service projects the JJ's have been involved in.

"We had a lot of fun making Christmas ornaments," Heles said. "We also visited the assisted living and did some caroling."

4-H is not solely about personal interest projects but also puts a large empha-

sis on citizenship projects and character counts.

Riley Skatvold, member of the Clay County Clubs, helped his mother Sarah prepare treats for the attendees.

"I like showing sheep," Riley Skatvold said.

Prior to their 4-H involvement, the Skatvolds did not have sheep, but did have horses. Sarah Skatvold appreciated what 4-H involvement meant to the development of youth.

"It's a lot of responsibility for them," Sarah Skatvold said. "It's something where they can learn things in addition to what they learn in school."

Tyler Christensen, who also helped in the kitchen before the event, said his focuses were a little different.

"I like rodeo," Christensen said. "Team roping and calf roping."

## Clay County 4-H Dog Project group for pets and owners

**By Katie Clausen**  
For the Plain Talk

Margaret Williams's Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Rocky, would probably agree that keeping active is best, and that's what the 4-H Dog Project group is all about.

4-H, run by the Clay County Extension Service, is a series of groups for youth run by volunteers in the community. Some groups, such as Williams', have a special focus; this one being canine companions.

"We basically learn about dog care," Williams said. "And dog training. I've been showing dogs my whole life."

Involved in 4-H herself as a child, Williams is dedicated to what the program represents and the life skills it helps youth develop.

"Ultimately they end up taking leadership roles," Williams said. "They learn this cooperative behavior not only with their pet, but with each other."

Williams believes both the animals and the humans involved in 4-H get something out of being part of the program. It is really rewarding to watch kids come out of their shell and help each other.

4-H gives youth a support system as well. "What they really get is they work with adults who allow them to blossom," Williams said.

Youth involved in the Dog Project meet at the 4-H center on Tues. or Thurs. nights. Williams has had as many as 20 kids in her group, and splits the group up between nights so they can focus on developing new skills and working with their animals efficiently.

"I like to teach them one-on-one," Williams said. "The dog-handler teams are each different."

Dog Project kids work with their canine companions on different training skill sets throughout their time with the group.

During the Clay County Fair Achievement Days, they compete among each other and sometimes they qualify to move on to the state competition.

"4-H has dog obedience, rally, and showmanship," Williams said.

While Williams acts as a guide in the training process, she stresses how this is really about the handler and their pet.

"What you put into it is what you get out of it," Williams said. "The kids are the ones doing the training, which makes me proud."

Williams admits that dog training might not be for everyone, but she thinks it is worth a try.

"It can be frustrating because you are working with an animal," Williams said. "But part of that is learning who you are and what you like and don't like."

Williams enjoys working within the 4-H program and helping kids work with their animals. Skill sets about patience, hard work, and sticking with a program are all character tools that help kids develop into successful teens and adults.

"They're there because they want to be there," Williams said. "They can go forward with these tools."

Young people interested in becoming part of the 4-H dog training and showing group are encouraged to meet at the 4-H Activity Center, located at 515 High St., on Nov. 18th at 7:00pm. The program kick-off for the year starts with registration on this night; dogs are asked to stay at home for this meeting.

Any other questions about 4-H youth programs can be directed towards the Clay County Extension office at 515 High St., Vermillion, SD 57069, (605) 677-7111.

## Jolley JJ's all about local support

**By Katie Clausen**  
For the Plain Talk

Pam Hanson and Kathy Heles are passionate about 4-H, and their groups vigorous involvement in the community is proof.

"I really promote my kids learning about community service," Hanson said, leader of the Jolly JJ's. "I want it to be second nature to them to help others."

The Jolly JJ's are a group of 4-Hers who are from within the city limits of Vermillion.

They are focused on community service and projects. Ranging in ages eight to 17, there are currently 14 members of the group.

"4-H turns eight year olds into eventually what a senior is," Hanson said. "They learn

life skills. They learn to give back to their community."

The JJ's focus a lot on arts and crafts, but there are kids with diverse interests such as showing small animals.

"We've modernized 4-H," Hanson said. "We are about science and technology."

The Jolly JJ's have an impressive track record of community service work, such as helping the Civic Council. They volunteer with the VFW ladies at the Sanford Care Center as well as over Memorial Day Weekend.

"They help with the flags," Hanson said. "We also write letters to veterans."

Passionate about helping with hunger, the Jolly JJ's also volunteer with the local Backpack Program. They are gearing up to prepare week-

end Backpacks with muffins and cereal.

"Last year we made 900 muffins," Hanson said. "The program goes through about 200 muffins a week, so we do about a month's worth."

The Vermillion Backpack program supplies food packages to six Vermillion area schools and continues to supply food during the summer months to students in need.

Arts and crafts projects at the Jolly JJ meetings can also be focused around community support groups.

"We do a lot of projects," Hanson said. "They like to do things, like centerpieces for the Welcome Table."

Hanson, who has been a 4-H leader for 10 years, tries to focus on life skills as well. "We have done things like

sewing," Hanson said. "Life skills are important."

Hanson hopes that her 4-H members will learn to love community service and keep contributing into their adulthood.

"They learn so much about giving back to the community," Hanson said. "It's the heart of who you are."

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