

News From Your County Agent
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It's stockshow time in Zavala County. Many 4-H members (and parents) have worked hard taking care of lambs, goats, hogs and steer projects. Oh and yes cannot forget the many rabbit exhibitors we will have this year. I hope all of you make an effort to attend this "once a year" event. Even though it is a "once a year event" it takes months to prepare animals and kids for the show. My most sincere wishes for a successful show for everyone and remember it is not a matter of winning but rather learning lifelong skills that will help everyone prepare for the real world challenges that await our young people. Greetings to all of you and thank you for reading this week.

This week I would like to share with you a story that Brittney Tullis Carpenter a 4-H parent shared with me a few months ago. This being the Zavala County Livestock Show week I felt it to be timely for me to share with each of you. This is a true story and many of you can relate to your own 4-H kids and what they go through with raising animals for the market shows.

A true 4-H Story That Touches The Hearts Of Many 4-H Families

Proud doesn't even come close when I reflect on what I learned about our 8 year old son this past week. Back in March he decided that he wanted to do the Market lamb project for his first year in 4-H. We made sure that he understood that the end would result in one of his lambs most likely being in the Sale at Fair and fulfilling its purpose as a Market animal. He was set on the task at hand. He knew he would get attached to both ewe lambs, who he named Pork and Beans, and he knew where one would likely end up. He surprised us with his tenacity when it came to early morning feedings before school and late nights nursing a sick one through pneumonia. He worked them everyday. Taught them how to lead and brace. He measured and weighed feed and supplements as well as making sure they had clean fresh water at all times. I would catch him hugging and loving on them when he would have a quiet moment. There was no doubt that he loved them.

At the junior Fair we could tell that he was very proud of his finished projects. He faced his fears and walked into the show ring with his head held high and gave it all he had. He built a beautiful partnership with Pork and Beans. As a mom, my heart was so full and I was in awe of my boy. I looked at his dad beaming with pride of his son.

Sale day came and we found out that Beans made the cut. Beans and Our boy posed for a picture for their potential buyers in front of a Douglas County back drop, then their Auction number was painted on Bean's back. At that point, tears started rolling down my sons face. I hugged him and kissed his forehead. But, he was still set on what was to fallow. That night, we watched him proudly walk her around the Auction arena and sell her for a number beyond what any of us ever expected. The incredible thing about 4-H auctions is that buyers don't pay just what the animal is worth, they exceed far beyond their market value because they believe in our children's hard work and want to invest in them. He left that auction arena on cloud nine and so pumped for next year.

Sunday came around and we knew it was going to be a rough day. Beans had a color painted on her back which indicated which truck she was to be loaded on. Time came to take her out of the pen and lead her that direction. My heart ached as I watch my child say goodbye to his partner. As much as I tried, I couldn't help but let the tears stream down my face. My boy gave her many hugs and scratches. His father, fighting his own tears asked if our son needed him to take Beans to the semi truck but, our sweet, courageous boy insisted on doing it himself. The barn was filled with many kids and parents that were going through the same thing. What a beautiful thing. These animals are destined for Market. How incredible that they land in the hands of children who love them and give them the best care while they are here on this earth. I found myself in a strange place. I wanted to fix my son's heartache, but at the same time I knew how important it was to fallow through with the ENTIRE 4-H project. From start to finish. And even though this was tough, we had to allow him this experience. Sobbing, he loaded Beans on the truck, walked her halter back to the sheep barn where he was embraced with many hugs from other 4-H members wiping their own tears because they to just said goodbye to their partners. And through all of this, he actually thanked us for allowing him this experience.

My son is my hero. He is bigger than I ever knew. My son ran the race and finished regardless of his feelings and emotions. He loved his lamb, but he knew what was important. He raised a great product through blood, sweat , and tears, and he completed his project. He never asked to keep her. He never tried to quit. He gave it his all and succeeded. We are a family who loves to eat meat and he wanted to contribute to that in his own way by raising a Market animal. He will never forget Beans but is ready to do it all again next year. This is what 4-H is all about. What extraordinary kids! That is what 4-H is in Zavala County. Producing extraordinary Zavala County Youth. Have a great stockshow week.

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