

In the hustle and bustle of July and August, oftentimes we hear comments about excitement and anticipation in ‘going to the fair’. Ninety-nine percent of the time the ‘fair’ they are referring to is the amusement portion of the county fair event. In all reality, for those of us involved in 4-H and FFA programs, the ‘fair’ is the exhibit side of this event!

Fairs remain financially and socially vital for many rural communities. For most small rural towns, this event is the largest commercial event they will attend throughout a year’s time. High school class reunions, family reunions, and other social gatherings are scheduled around the county fair dates as much as a year in advance.

In everyone’s excitement about the ‘county fair’, let’s visit about clarifying the different activities that happen during this event. The amusement portion of the county fair brings in exciting rides, games, concerts, car races, lots of fried foods and much more usually during the evening hours providing local entertainment for families. What most people do not see or recognize, are the exhibits on display in the 4-H/commercial exhibit buildings. In addition, most fair goers fail to see the months of hard work that went into getting those exhibits to the ‘fair’.

4-H members enroll in project areas at the beginning of the program year in October. These youth attend club meetings, give project talks and demonstrations, participate in community service activities, and develop leadership and citizenship skills throughout the year.

Project leaders are few and far between in our current 4-H program, therefore, alternate educational programs have been developed to continue the learning by doing aspect. Many online lessons have been developed in the form of Project Challenges and virtual project learning series. These lessons can be completed individually, in a group or at a club meeting. These educational opportunities are researched based, age appropriate and available for completion at any time. With our technology driven society, this form of educational programming is receiving positive feedback.

In addition to selecting project areas, these youth work hard to learn new skills and increase their knowledge. There are a multitude of opportunities for youth to take advantage of in many project areas as it is a year-long process in working with their projects. Many youths enrolled in the beef project select their animals in the fall of the year and must have them identified in March or April. Developing proper feed rations and building their confidence in breaking these animals to lead involves many hours of dedication and commitment.

Clothing, foods, and visual arts project members begin selecting patterns, recipes and ideas to arrive at just the right item for their exhibit. Youth continue to increase their knowledge of their projects throughout the year.

We are extremely grateful to those volunteers who have been instrumental in teaching our youth skills in sewing, visual arts, foods, photography and livestock projects. Our Twin Creeks Extension District is always looking for additional volunteers willing to teach our youth in a positive learning environment.

Communities get excited when fair season approaches. Before heading down to the carnival rides and games portion of the ‘fair’, take time out of your busy schedules to stop and look at the exhibits entered by our 4-H and FFA youth. You will be amazed at their talents and the hours of work they have put into “Making the Best Better”.

For those currently not enrolled in our 4-H program, this would be a perfect time to check out project areas of interest for your youth. Enrollment opens October 1, 2021 and we would encourage you to get your child involved in the largest national youth organization!

Please contact Patsy Maddy at Twin Creeks Extension District with any questions related to the county fair and/or our 4-H program enrollment. (785-877-5755 or [pmaddy@ksu.edu](mailto:pmaddy@ksu.edu))

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## **Article Header**

### **“Misconceptions of the County Fair”**

#### **“Chasing Clovers”**

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