



Fair time

By Sam Dieter

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Cooler weather helped riders Saturday at the open class horse show, part of the Thomas County Fair.

"There're just a lot of people here today, but it went well, you know, typically it's 100 (degrees)," said Jay Todd, who helped organize the show.

A total of 53 riders competed at the open class horse show from 8:30 a.m. to about 4 p.m. Saturday at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Todd said that number was slightly higher than normal, but that organizers moved the show along faster than normal here. They often have to hurry to get the show over before the car races start on summer weekends. Riders competed in halter, English pleasure, English equitation, bareback horsemanship, western pleasure, western horsemanship,

reining, barrels, poles, flags and trail riding. The 4-H horse show goes all day today.

The show was open to people who were not in area 4-H clubs. Although it included some adult riders most of the contestants were younger kids. Many were in 4-H clubs, and the lineup included familiar faces from other shows and fair events.

"I think I did pretty good considering I got a baby," Madisyn Haggard, 13, said as Alayah suckled on its mother, Skye, who she had been riding all day.

Her friend Ariel Severson, 20, said they had spent 30 hours on horse events that weekend, between competing in the Thomas County rodeo pageant and on a drill team show the day before.

"I counted because I was really tired," Severson said, pausing to count one more time.

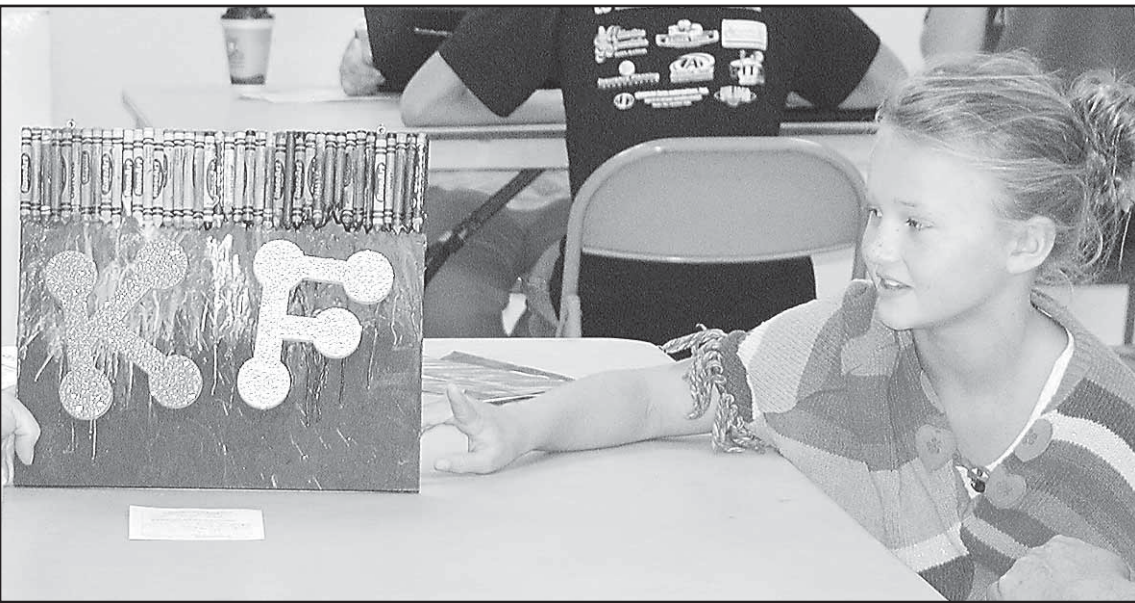
She said they are both very involved, but that the time they spent was worth it.



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Kids get to try their hands at many skills during the Thomas County Fair, including Kourtney Finley, 10, who showed off her artwork (below, left) at the 4-H visual arts judging Thursday. At

the open class horseshow on Saturday, Cadence Koch, 6, led her pony Orio through a gate (above) and Bailey Bixenman, 14, went around the barrels on AJ.



HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press

Payton Welsh, a 13-year-old contestant from Meade, shook the judges' hands after dismounting her horse during the horsemanship portion of the 2013 Thomas County Rodeo Pageant. The judges, JT Croft, Sheila Croft and Shane Sommers, scored the contestants on their knowledge of horses, appearance, mount and dismount and horsemanship skills during this portion of the competition.



Young horsewomen compete for county fair royalty honors

By Heather Alwin

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Five of western Kansas' best young horsewomen competed Friday for positions as Thomas County Rodeo Queen and Princess.

The ladies displayed their horsemanship skills, modeled western wear and gave speeches and interviews as part of this year's Thomas County Rodeo Pageant. The winners will be crowned at 7:45 p.m. tonight, just before the rodeo.

The 2013 queen contestants were Chelsie Calliham of Colby and Ariel Severson of Gem. The 2013 princess contestants were Madisyn Haggard of Gem, Abbey Schmeiser of Colby and Payton Welsh of Meade.

The pageant began with a horsemanship display at the Thomas County Fairgrounds where last year's princess and junior princess, Faith Edwards and Emeline

Hutton, set a riding pattern for the contestants to follow.

Each contestant followed the riding pattern set by last year's royalty, demonstrating their riding skills and ability to control their horses.

At the end of the riding pattern, contestants dismounted to chat with the judges, answering questions about tack, their riding skills, horses and the muddy weather conditions.

Later, the contestants modeled "funky, fun" western wear, delivered speeches and answered questions at Colby Community College. Family, friends and fair board members were on hand to watch each contestant's performance during a lunch catered by Sunflower Kitchen Bakery with cakes donated by Linda VanHorn.

Faith and Emeline emceed the indoor session and entertained the crowd with stories during breaks between contestants.

Pageant judges were J.T. and

Sheila Croft of Copeland and Shane Sommers of Victoria. Sheila Croft sits on the Miss Rodeo America board and is currently head of the Miss Rodeo Kansas board.

The Crofts have judged dozens of past rodeo pageants, though this was Sommers' first time judging. Sommers runs a horse training and cowboy service and competed as a bull rider for several years at collegiate and professional levels.

Every contestant will win a prize package based on her title, and all contestants will receive a bucket, halter, hay bag, splint boots, shirt, purse and hat.

The newly crowned rodeo queen and princess will ride in the Thomas County Fair Parade Tuesday and will represent the Thomas County Rodeo at rodeos and events across the region.

