


Tuesday, July 26, 2011

The Goodland Star-News



Northwest Kansas District Free Fair
Saturday, July 30
Monday, Aug. 1 to Friday, Aug. 5

4-H projects always a learning adventure

By **Pat Schiefen**
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Fourth year 4-Her Ella Ihrig is busy with a long list of projects she has been working on and hopes to have all finished by the time of Northwest District Free Fair Saturday, July 30, to check out on Saturday, Aug. 6.

Ihrig has projects ranging from canning, quilting, knitting, a booth on her reading project and a breeding heifer.

She and her mother, Amity Ihrig, say the projects are an adventure and that they always learn something from them.

Ihrig started canning last year. She said she got her water bath kettle and the jars from her grandmother, Karen Gillihan. Last year she made strawberry jam. She said it was good enough to go to the state fair but was marked down at the state fair because the head space or the distance from the top of the jar to the jam was bigger than it was supposed to be. When her four-year-old brother Rhett is asked if he wants jelly for his bread he asks, "Is it sister's jam?" If it isn't he doesn't want it.

This year she tried making jelly. Jam only has fruit and sugar in it. Jelly is the juice of the fruit and has sugar in it but pectin is used to get the jelly to set up. On one batch of strawberry jelly she said it did not set up so they had to start over and on a different batch of jelly it was setting up so fast she hardly had time to get it in the jars before it set up. She also made apple berry and grape jelly.

She got a pressure canning kettle this year. Her mom wanted her to see if she liked canning before they bought one. This is a type of kettle that processes canned items under so many pounds of pressure. Pressure canning is used a lot on none acidic things such as green beans and meat. Ihrig said she tried soup that way. The soup is the broth with the chicken and vegetables. She said you do not put the noodles in when you can. They are added when the soup is prepared to eat. One thing she said you don't want to can is dried beans as they will blow up.

She said this is the second year for making pickles. In order to get the pickles done before the fair the cucumbers were bought. Usually she gets her garden produce for canning from

her grandfather Harold Gillihan's garden but this year the gardens are running really late. She said he has a big garden but hasn't gotten a lot out of it.

Her family has been eating up the pickles she has made but her mom said they have put aside the ones she needs to take to the fair. Last she said she and Sydney Winston were the only two taking canning in 4-H. She thinks there will be more this year.

"It's a lot of work," said her mother.

Ihrig showed off her computerized sewing machine that she got for Christmas. Some of the items she has made are pot holders and a pair of decorated jeans for her younger cousin.

She went to a Ellis County 4-H textiles day in Hays on Saturday, March 5, where she pieced a wall hanging and then was showed how to hand quilt it. Ihrig said that getting the knot underneath the fabric so it wouldn't show was hard to do. At the fair quilting, cross stitching, horse hair braiding, felting and making thread using carding combs and spinning wheel were demonstrated. She has also pieced a table runner or another wall hanging with various black and white fabrics with a medium green center. When asked whether she was going to hand quilt or machine quilt the item she said she had not decided.

This is the second year for Ihrig to do knitting. She said the first year she had trouble keeping the stitches straight but when she picked up her knitting needles this year it all seemed to click. Her 4-H knitting teacher is Shauna Armknecht. Ihrig said she likes to make things to give away. She said she has made lots of knitted wash cloths. She has a scarf finished that she will enter in the fair.

Ihrig is working on making a knitted purse that she will felt when she is done. Felting is usually done on something made of wool. She said you put the item in a washing machine with an agitator or other things to twist the item and washed with a soap. After it is washed the item is dried in a hot dryer. The item will shrink and fill in. She said sometimes the item has to be washed more than once.

She said that knitting is something that she can do while watching television. Usually she



Fourth year 4-Her Ella Ihrig showed how her computerized sewing machine needed to be threaded with its threading system. Ihrig said her machine won't sew right if you don't use the threading system. Ihrig used her sewing machine to make a pieced wall hanging, decorated jeans and pot holders.

Photos by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News



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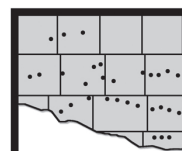
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Ella Ihrig holds a string of beads she is going to use to decorate a candleholder. She said it has been hard to figure out which glue to use to stick the string of beads to the glass. The beads were left over after she made key chains.

waits until school gets out to start on her projects in 4-H but knitting is something she can work on year round.

Ihrig said she is proud of continuing the tradition of sewing and canning that her grandmothers and others have always done. The next things she said she is planning on trying crocheting and counted cross stitch.

She was also trying to figure out how she was going to glue beads strung on a wire to a glass candle holder to decorate it. Figuring out what glue to use has been hard she said. They are down to using super glue or hot glue. She said the beads she is using are beads left from when she made key chains for everyone.

This is the second year for Ihrig to have cattle entered at the fair. Last year she entered a bucket calf. Ihrig started out with a heifer and it got sickly and nothing they did seemed to make the calf better so they bought a bull calf. When they did that the first calf got better. She enter the bull calf in the fair.

This year she has a shorthorn heifer that is out at her grandmother's Shirley Pearson's. She said she had to learn how to lead them. With a heifer she said you use a show stick to get the animal to stand like you want it. The animal should have its feet square when looking at it from the tail end. In the side view the animal needs to have one foot out more.

Ihrig is 10 but will be 11 in August and will be in the fifth grade at Central Elementary School. Her dad is Justin Ihrig.

She belongs to the Country Clovers 4-H with Glenda Cochran and Diane Zelfer as leaders.

Ihrig said she has learned new skills in 4-H as well as learning to help the community.



Ella Ihrig knitted as she talked at her interview. This project will be a purse and when it is finished she will felt it. Felting is washing the wool item with agitation and soap and then drying with high heat in the dryer. This is her second year in knitting. This year was easier for her when how to do it just clicked. She has given away most of the things she had made.

Be safe and enjoy the 2011 Fair!

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4-H philosophy of life for McClung family

By Ava Betz

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For the McClung family, 4-H is more a philosophy of life than a series of fair projects. Gary and Laura McClung have already seen their two oldest children, Anna, 24, and Jonathan, 21, through years of activities, projects and 4-H experiences.

Now Jonah, 14 and a freshman in high school this fall, is already an experienced 4-H member. His sister, Ashtin, 8 years old, will be in third grade this fall. This is her second year in 4-H, Ashtin said, but adds, "I've been in pre-4-H A LOT!" Both are members of the Prairiedale 4-H Club.

Both Gary and Laura experienced 4-H for themselves growing up. Laura was a member for 14 years; Gary was a member for six or seven years. Gary traveled all over the United States during the course of his 4-H experience through leadership programs and other activities and Laura had similar experiences. "We know what benefits there are" in 4-H, Laura said. "We know what benefits we got from 4-H and what it instilled in us. We want our kids to have that."

And, while there are similarities in what 4-H activities offer each member, there are opportunities for individual development as well, they noted. "Each of our kids have taken us on new adventures; it's really interesting," Laura said.

There is a wall of over 100 4-H plaques in the McClung household which is now full and the plaques have edged around the corner and spilled onto another wall, testifying to years of show animals and county and state fair projects.

As the Sherman County Fair approaches, Jonah and Ashtin are well into the animal projects which keep them busy nearly year round, and are putting the finishing touches on their



4-H is a philosophy of life for McClung family who have been involved in the program for many years, and Jonah and Ashtin the last two 4-Hers for Gary and Laura McClung. The McClung family has a variety of animal

projects including dogs with Jonah's Cocker Spaniel Buffy and Ashtin's miniature Schnauzer Sammie who will be in the dog show.

Photos by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

other fair entries.

Ashtin is trying a new activity this year – dog showmanship. Sammie is a miniature Schnauzer, and this is Sammie's first year as a 4-H dog. "So I'm just trying to get her calmed down and teach her the basic stuff she needs to know," Ashtin said. She gave a brief demonstration of the training tools she

uses: praise and treats to reward Sammie for accomplishments.

Buffy is a Cocker Spaniel being trained by Jonah. He has been working with Buffy for five years. At this point she is so well-trained, "I don't hardly have to do anything with her," he explained. Dogs trained for 4-H competition are judged by what they

have learned, not by the experience of their owners, Jonah said. Agility, performing "off leash" and showmanship are what 4-H dog trainers are aiming for in their trainees.

Both trainers noted that exercising the dogs to "wear them down" a bit before showing them helps the dogs to keep their composure in the judging

arena. Dog training as a 4-H project started with McClung's older son, Jonathan, who trained a now 14-year-old who has been to both county and state fairs, and who still has the spirit to compete, if not the youth, Laura McClung said.

A tour of the farm includes Ashtin's chickens, which are shown in open

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Ashtin checked on the chicken pen before getting them inside for the night. She said they get eggs, and will be shown in an open class at the fair.

class. Ashtin was raising a rabbit in her bedroom, but it died and she is therefore out of the rabbit business for this year's fair, she explained.

The family's experience in 4-H animal projects includes heart-tugging stories of getting too close to their animals. Jonah made a family pet of a bucket calf which taught him to distance himself from his projects. He no longer names his farm animal projects. Steers cost quite a bit to feed, he noted, so he is planning to cut his steer projects to perhaps every other year.

The cost of their projects comes from the sale of their animals in previous years, the McClungs explained. They each have special accounts dedicated to receiving money from the sale of their projects and from which they pay feed and other bills for the current year's projects. As Gary and Laura pointed out, a by-product of 4-H projects is a practical course in finance and bookkeeping.

Ashtin still names her animals, but has learned from her siblings not to make pets of her farm animal projects.

Raising animals includes developing an eye for what buyers and judges want in a meat-producing animal. "I really like my white pig, I think it's filling out like it should," Jonah said.

"You can go in one day (for judging) and get nothing, go in the next day, different judge, same animal and get grand champion."

"Every judge wants something different, so that's why you never know," Laura said.

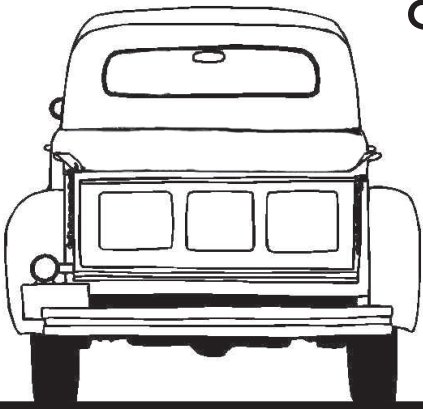
Ashtin has found showing an animal can be difficult. Last year's goat was hard to handle. "It pulled me down every time," she said. This year she has a different goat and she's hoping for a different outcome. Pigs are the easiest to raise and show, she said, "because you don't have to hold onto them."

They have a self-feeding system for the pigs, which simplifies feeding chores, and, what may be a secret ingredient, Ashtin admits to giving her pigs treats of jellybeans and cereal. In case you are wondering, her pigs seem to like Chex Mix. Jonah notes the goats have a sweet tooth for horse treats.

Raising animals are only part of the projects Jonah and Ashtin have been working on. This year Jonah's projects are buymanship; dog showmanship, obedience and agility; electricity; foods, level 3; goat, sheep and swine; leadership; air rifle; shotgun; crafts; Legos; and woodworking, level 2.

Ashtin will compete in sewing, level 2; goat, sheep, swine; reading;

Have a great time!



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air rifle; crafts; and woodworking, level 1.

Ashtin's woodworking project this year is a treasure box, which she will build, sand, decorate and finish. Her sewing project will include a pillowcase, a bag, a dress and another sewn item.

Jonah explained his Legos project is part of a wider category, called "Connects" which challenges participants to build animated objects with parts and pieces of all kinds. One of his first such pieces was a carnival ride-type swing almost as tall as his little sister was at the time. One of his favorite projects this year is creating a booth to explain his interest in shotguns and shooting sports.

This year Ashtin will know about the wool industry from the ground up. In addition to showing her sheep, she has to make a wool garment and learn about the sheep industry for the category she has entered.

This is a category Jonah entered for three years, but sewing and cooking, though he has entered those projects in the past, are not his favorite. "My mom makes me do sewing and cooking, but it's mainly to make sure we know how to do it later on in our lives," he explained. Buymanship, he explained, is buying or taking an article of clothing and explaining how to care for it, what it cost, how to coor-

dinate it with other clothing. Shooting sports, connects, and drawing are the projects he favors most.

His mother still hopes buymanship will eventually teach him not to mix stripes and plaids.

With the projects comes the responsibility for keeping records. This year there are changes in the record keeping - rather than a record book of all the member's projects, records will be tied to each project. Record forms will be geared by difficulty to each age level. "I'm waiting to see if it is a good change or not," Laura said, but noted that for her children the record-keeping part of a project has not been the most fun. "Record book time around our house is not a good time," she said.

As noted at the beginning of this article, fair projects are not the only 4-H activity. Jonah recently went canoeing on the Niobara River through 4-H. There were other activities on that trip, including Jonah's favorite, rides on a zip line.

Ashtin recently attended 4-H camp at Rock Springs, where she went horseback riding and canoeing and did archery. She is also involved in Girl Scouts and Jonah is involved in Boy Scouts and both very active in their church.

And some city people wonder what there is to do in a small town.



The McClung 4-H animal projects include two goats, two sheep and three pigs. The two goats are interested in anyone who looks into their pen, and will climb up to get a treat. The cover photo of this section is one of the McClung goats looking for such a treat, and was disappointed when the cameraman did not have any. Gary McClung came over and provided a treat for the goat.

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