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FEATURED

4-H prepares young members for the fair

Karina Martinez

Feb 2, 2020



4-h member holds rabbit for the small animal pre-fair event at Tractor Supply Saturday, February 1.

EL CENTRO — Imperial County 4-H hosted a small animal pre-fair event at Tractor Supply Saturday, February 1, for young 4-H members to practice handling their animals while being judged before the California Mid-Winter Fair and Fiesta.

4-H Leader David Shelton said Mount Signal and Star Route 4-H helped him set up the event for members to practice speaking in front of a crowd and answer questions about their animal.

“It’s for the kids to come and get ready for the fair to show their animals,” said Shelton.

Shelton said they had members as young as seven — some of which have never competed. The leaders said they wanted to give them experience and show them what they need to do and know.

Shelton’s daughter, Sonora, judged the event. As the judge, Sonora said she judged how they would at the fair. She said she tried to show them what they will need to know and give them tips for their showmanship.

“We do this so they can know what to work on for the actual fair,” said Sonora.

She said they look for how the animal is being cared for and how comfortable the child is with the animal. “We see how they handle the animal and how the animal is acting itself because it shows how much the person has been working with it,” Sonora said.

“We ask them questions about their knowledge and how much they know about their animal — and that can separate them from first or second place,” said Sonora.

The young members registered their animals and started to practice. Most members had rabbits, others had dogs or guinea pigs.

Each child posed with their rabbit and took a picture with them. The leaders coached the children on posing with their animal and how to hold them. Those who finished pictures brushed their rabbits’ fur. Others walked around, holding their rabbit.



The children asked the leaders different questions about their animals and how they should care for them. “It’s all about teaching them how to care for the animal,” said David.

Sonora said she started 4-H in kindergarten and is now a junior in college. “The goal is to teach them so they can take over,” said Sonora.

Sonora listed a few skills that members can gain from being in this program, including time management skills, multitasking, and teamwork. Sonora said that being in 4-H helped her in other areas outside of 4-h.

"I remember I was a super shy kid and because of doing this, I can now go out in front of audiences and give a speech," Sonora said.

"It really teaches them leadership skills and how to care for something other than themselves," said Sonora.

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