

EMERALD STAR PROJECT:

Visiting With Seniors

By Spencer Wittrock, Loma Vista 4-H

For my emerald star project, I have been coordinating visitations to the Palms Senior Home in Ventura. My project included not only rabbit and cavy visitations, but also rabbit hopping demonstrations, and creating an informational sheet to submit to the Clover Safe Notes and the 4-H Library. I, along with volunteers from our rabbit and cavy project would bring our animals around to the seniors at the Palms Senior Home. Our conversations ranged from stories about their kids, the animals they used to raise and their own kids being in 4-H. So many of the seniors loved our monthly visits, one of the staff told us how this man never left his room unless he absolutely had to, but he came down to the lobby voluntarily to see and hold the rabbits. Another lady always looked forward to our visits, even though she told me the same story 6 months in a row, she was always very enthusiastic about petting the rabbits and it was clear to see that holding and petting them really made her day.

These visitations were good for everyone, not just the residents of the home. One young girl in our 4-H visitation group was really shy, as her dad later told us, but we never would have known it by the way she got up in front of everyone and told us about her rabbit's favorite foods and activities.

The other part of my visitation effort was the rabbit hopping demonstration. We would put our rabbits in their harnesses and leashes, then took them over a course of low jumps, even though the pace was slow at times the elderly crowd enjoyed seeing the rabbits run through the course. I have a feeling that they weren't particularly interested in the history of rabbit hopping, or how our rabbit hopping project was established, but I could see that they liked watching the rabbits and listening to the kids.

This visitation project has been a large success and our 4-H group plans on continuing it throughout the rest of the year.

