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4-H LIVESTOCK AUCTION THE 'PLACE' TO BE AT FAYETTE COUNTY FAIR

Uniontown, PA – The Fayette County Fair is chock-full of events and activities that people look forward to all year long. One of those is the annual livestock auction, which brings together 4-H Club members with bidders looking for market goats, swine, steers and lambs.

The auction is the culmination of months of hard work and dedication by 4-H members. It's also a learning experience and a fundraiser, and for buyers, it's an opportunity to purchase top-quality meat at a good price.

Held since the 1960s, the long-running auction has been breaking records in recent years. It topped all previous sales figures in 2019 and set a record in 2021 as well. Livestock sale committee co-chair Linda Rooker said last year's sale brought in more than \$700,000.

Even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the fair itself was canceled, the livestock sale continued to bring in revenue.

"We had a sale in 2020," Rooker said. "We had a three-day show for the kids."

Rooker said the sale was not advertised in any way, yet it recorded the second largest sales figures the auction had generated up to that point.

Due to its popularity, as well as its benefit to the county's 4-H youth and bidders alike, the 4-H Livestock Auction has earned the Fayette County PR Initiative's Faces and Places designation for July.

Rooker said the fair usually sees upwards of 300 animals come through its gates for auction. The animals went through a weigh-in process and will be judged throughout the week in preparation for the auction, set for 5 p.m. Friday, August 5, in the Indoor Arena.

Fayette County 4-H Educator Jennifer Deichert said the club members involved in raising market animals have been working toward this event for months.

"Most of the 4-H members who carry steer projects started around November," she said, noting that those raising goats, swine and lambs usually begin raising their animals in April.

Deichert said 4-H members often are asked what the auction teaches them, and their answers include several life skills.

“A lot of times, that factor is learning time management skills, discipline and responsibility,” she said. “(That comes) along with the hard work because they recognize that if they don’t do it, nobody is going to do it.”

She said the livestock sale can be an emotional experience for 4-H members, who often become attached to their animal projects.

Senior member Kenzie Mowry of Mill Run knows first-hand about the time and dedication it takes to raise the livestock. Mowry is in her final year as a 4-H member and will enter the livestock auction with one of each type of animal. She first began showing and selling 4-H livestock at the age of 8.

“I get very excited about the fair and also for the auction because it’s pretty much showing that all the hard work has come to an end,” she said. “It’s just the conclusion of a really cool experience.”

Mowry said raising her market animals has taught her a great deal about managing her time, working hard, and “how to achieve certain goals that you have. Just different life skills, I guess.”

And even though she’s a veteran at the livestock auction, she said she still gets attached to her projects.

“I cry (for) at least a day or two,” she said. “Then I think, ‘There’s always next year. I can get another one.’”

Mowry said this year’s sale is a little bittersweet because it is her final year participating. However, she expressed her appreciation for the buyers who have come out to support the sale over the years.

“(I want to say) thank you to all the buyers who have come before,” she said. “We do truly appreciate their support.”

Mowry said she believes people attend the auction because they want to support the 4-H members and also because they know how much time and effort the members have put into their projects and can be sure they are getting good quality meat.

Deichert said she thinks that is especially true since the pandemic, with people more concerned than ever about where their meat is coming from and how it has been raised.

“I think the kids also do a really good job of reaching out to potential buyers,” she said. “In Fayette County, we have a fantastic community that really takes the time to show up and support them as buyers.”

Rooker explained that anyone can bid on an animal at the livestock auction. Proceeds from the initial sales go back to the 4-H members and help to offset the cost of purchasing the animal, as well as the cost of feed and other expenses.

Rooker said some buyers take the opportunity to donate the animals back once they’ve purchased them. In those cases, she said, the animals are resold, and the proceeds go to the 4-H Livestock Scholarship Fund.

“So, there are multiple ways to support the kids,” she said.

And support them, they do.

“We have tremendous support from the community,” Rooker said. “Last year was the best auction we’ve ever had.”

Rooker said there were 140 buyers who took part in last year’s record-setting auction.

“We get a lot of the same buyers, year after year, but there new buyers, too,” she said.

Rooker attributes that partly to the outstanding efforts of the 4-H members, who reach out to potential buyers to invite them to the sale.

“When you have new kids, they may know different people,” she said.

Whatever the reason, the livestock auction has been enjoying great success for the past few years.

“We were surprised last year at how great it was,” Rooker said. “But the community just rallies around and does a phenomenal job to support the kids.”

The 4-H members and livestock sale committee have high hopes for another great turnout this Friday, August 5. Bidder registration begins at 3 p.m. in the Indoor Arena, followed by the auction at 5 p.m.

To view the full Fayette County Fair schedule, visit www.fayettefair.com.

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