

Successfully Showing Yourself in the World's Show Ring

By: Cassie Godwin

What do you do for fun? What is your favorite hobby? Like every student in America, I received these questions quite often throughout my grade school career. Each time the question was presented, my response was always quick and consistent; "I show livestock." My answer was usually followed with a perplexed look and a comment along the lines of, "How is that going to help you in the future?" For the longest time, their confusion, confused me, but as I got older I realized that the agriculture industry is often seen through a misconstrued and unclear vision. But it is time to remove those fogged and misunderstood lenses, and highlight one of our industry's most beneficial practices; youth livestock projects.



When society thinks of livestock shows and projects, the mental image that often appears is one of ribbons, banners and buckles. While awards such as those are tangible benefits of show day success, it is just the first layer of the mountain of lifelong benefits that students gain from working with livestock projects. The following list highlights what I believe are the top five qualities that are learned, and enhanced, as a result of youth showing livestock.

Networking

It is a well known fact that in life it isn't so much about what you know, as it is who you know, and by being involved in the livestock industry you can interact with a great deal of people. Every livestock sale, show or event is a pool of influential agriculturalists for young people to dive into. Forming these connections results in two positives: future opportunities and promoting agriculture. The individuals that now lead our industry, judge livestock shows, organize these shows and manage youth associations, were once out in show rings developing the same qualities that today's exhibitors are currently enhancing. Each introduction, handshake and conversation has potential to lead to an internship position, or possibly a career. Networking also strengthens the agriculture industry. Every member in the agriculture community, no matter how young or old, has the same ultimate goal: "to protect and promote the industry that feeds the world." In order to maintain and improve the prosperity of the agriculture industry, it is vital that all generations of agriculturalists join forces. By coming together, young people gain invaluable insight and wisdom from older, more experienced generations, and in return, older generations get new and refreshing perspectives and opinions.

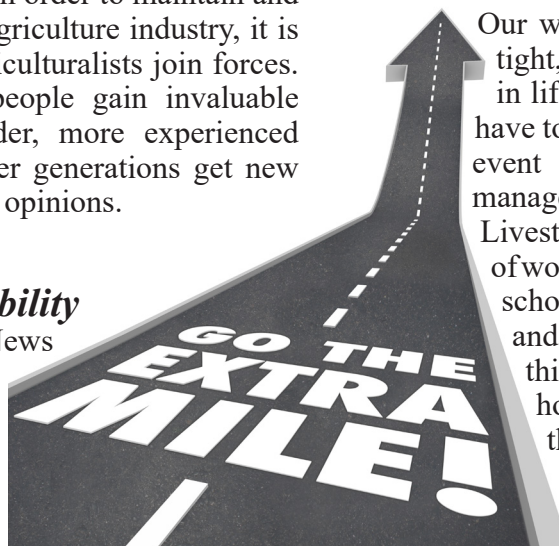
many employers are prepared and willing to train newly hired employees on company specific protocols and procedures, but skills such as a strong work ethic and dependability cannot be taught; they are qualities of a person's character that can only be enhanced through experiences and opportunities. In the workforce, employers want employees who arrive to work early and work diligently until the task at hand is completed to perfection. When young people work with livestock projects, they are taking on a full time commitment. The well being and success of their animals is 100 percent their responsibility and takes priority over many aspects of their lives. By having such a large responsibility, students learn to keep their word and see their project through all the way to the end, as well as hard work is the first step to success.

Time Management

Our world is fast paced and operates on a tight, detailed schedule. Almost everything in life has a deadline, and those deadlines have to be met. Therefore, for any company, event or group to run smoothly, time management and prioritization are a must. Livestock exhibitors' daily routines consist of working with and caring for their projects, school, other extra curricular activities and family time. In order to succeed at this juggling act, students have to learn how to prioritize their duties and allot the appropriate time to accomplish each one. The ability to effectively manage time will be priceless in the

Work Ethic and Reliability

A recent article posted by US News stated that one of the most valued qualities an employee can possess is a strong work ethic. In today's job market



workforce. It is very rare for an employee to have only one task to complete at any given time; usually each worker's plate is full with various responsibilities, all of which are important to the success of the work place. When today's livestock exhibitors embark on their careers, managing time will be second nature due to the fact they have been implementing that skill in their daily lives for years.



Acceptance of Challenges & Failures with Grace

Winston Churchill once said, "Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm." Not everything in life is easy, and even the best planners run into obstacles that they didn't plan on running into. The key to success and happiness is facing these challenges and failures with grace, strength and determination. The fact is you could spend every waking hour working with your hog, calf or sheep, making sure it looks the part for show day and still not take home the purple banner. You could work diligently, doing everything in your power to get your barrow ready and he could go off feed a few nights before. Circumstances like these are uncontrollable and can only be handled once they have surfaced. Dealing with challenges and failures at a young age helps students have the ability to continue on after hardships and develop an appreciation for the times they do succeed.



Cassie Godwin is a senior at Texas Tech University, majoring in Agriculture Communications with a minor in Animal Science, and an often contributor to TPPA communication and marketing efforts. This past summer she was the Corporate Affairs Intern for Cargill Meat Solutions in Wichita, Kansas. At Tech, Cassie is a promising member of the Livestock Judging Team, very active in the Block & Bridle Club and Ag Communicators of Tomorrow, and serves as a Representative in the Student Government.

Lifelong Friendships

The agriculture community is a close-knit web of hardworking, caring and reliable people. Showing livestock gives students countless opportunities to meet and develop lasting friendships with other people who share their passion for the livestock industry. For a moment, picture your closest friends. Chances are several of the faces that popped into your mind were people you met from showing livestock. It never ceases to amaze me how you can walk into any livestock show, see a friendly smile and automatically feel at home. It is an industry that requires the help of family and friends to reach the end target. The part that makes showing livestock truly special is that at the end of the day, whether you are holding the banner at the backdrop or not, the family and friends that helped you along the way are still there and always will be.



As a result of working with livestock projects, students learn skills and make memories that cannot be taught in a classroom. At first glance the concept of showing livestock is about walking your hog, working your steer's hair and bracing your lamb; but it really is so much more. There will come a day when every exhibitor shows for the last time, the bright ribbons will fade and the glistening buckles will dull; but the relationships formed and qualities developed will endure long after you walk out of the show ring and into the real world.