



Strength in Numbers

Kids Cross County Lines to Form Teams for State Competition

WAKEENEY, Kan. – If ever there was a testament to the value of teamwork, R. Scott Barrows has seen it.

For the past three years, Barrows, the director of the Golden Prairie Extension District in northwest Kansas, has patiently guided youth from three counties in the district to a top 3 finish in the state's 4-H horse judging contest.

"When we are dealing with fewer numbers (population) in western Kansas, [district teams] really allow us some great opportunities," Barrows said.

His 2012 team included two 4-Hers from Trego County, one from Gove County, and one from the nearby Walnut Creek Extension District. Each of the kids was successful at their county fair, but separately, their counties couldn't form teams for state competition.

"We will travel to make three, four, five, maybe six contests a year with different kids at different ages," Barrows said.

Barrows added that in addition to horse judging, 4-H youth in the district also are able to combine their county efforts for teams in livestock judging, leadership contests and shooting sports.

Dwight and Lisa Jacobus of Oakley say they have taken advantage of the Golden Prairie district in forming teams for the 4-H shooting sports state competition.

Golden Prairie Extension District director R. Scott Barrows says forming district teams gives kids a chance to compete in state competitions.



In recent years, they've had kids of varying ages participate from Gove and Logan counties, and have just now begun getting kids from Trego County into the mix.

"For the state qualifying shoot that we have every February here in Oakley, we try to form separate teams if they have enough from each county," said Lisa Jacobus, "but if not, we can always put together counties to make a [district] team."

Lisa Jacobus notes that having the added exposure is helping local kids; several, including her own son and daughter, have gone on to participate with the Kansas team at the national shooting sports competition held each summer.

Barrows said that the local 4-H councils save money by sharing costs for team fees, but counties also are able to cut their individual costs when youth travel together to contests. He says these experiences are "the vehicle that brings people together with like interests."

"As a young person, it puts you in your comfort zone, but at the same time, you get a broader spectrum of what's really out there," Barrows said.