

4-H members are busy during the Alcona County Fair

By Mary Weber

"I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country and my world."

-- The 4-H Pledge

Head, Heart, Hands and Health are the four Hs in 4-H and they are the four values its members work on through a wide variety of engaging programs. More than six million 4-H youth in urban neighborhoods, suburban schoolyards and rural farming communities stand out among their peers; building revolutionary opportunities and implementing community-wide change at an early age.

With over 500,000 volunteers, 3,500 professionals, and more than 60 million alumni, the 4-H movement supports young people from elementary school through high school with programs designed to shape future leaders and innovators. Fueled by research-driven programming, 4-H'rs engage in hands-on learning activities in the areas of science, citizenship and healthy living. In rural communities like Alcona County, much of 4-H

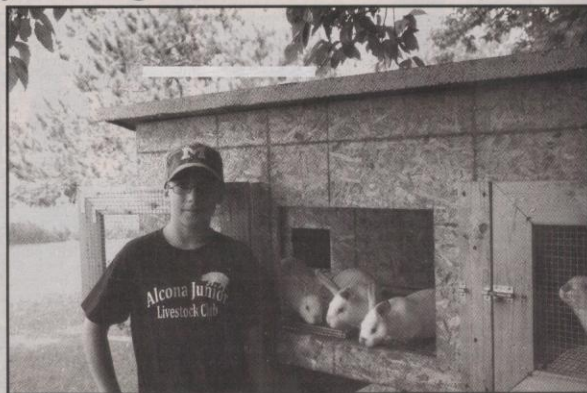
studies revolve around farming and animals. Their constant care for the animals, health concerns and dedicated training can be seen every summer at the Alcona County Fair.

These young people, bonded together in friendly groups with similar interests, are encouraged to perform their showmanship at the fair. The animals they have been working with for months and years are to be stringently judged and evaluated. The competition is intense, but the 4-H'rs are excited and confident. Whether they receive a grand champion ribbon or are disqualified from entry, they are all winners in a labor of love and education while building friendships and a multitude of lasting memories.

At random the Alcona County Review chose two 4-H'rs who will be exhibiting their interests at this year's fair, Nelson Quintel and Madison Lane.

Nelson's Story

Nelson Quintel is an articulate 11-year-old resident of Alcona County. Despite living in this rural farming area for a number of years, Nelson never really liked going to the fair until three or four years ago. That's when Nelson's



Nelson Quintel with his pen of three rabbits which he will show and sell at the Alcona Junior Livestock Club Market Sale at the Alcona County Fair. This year's market sale will take place on Thursday, August 22 at 6 p.m. Photos by Mary Weber.

mother, Judy French, got her son interested in showing rabbits and 4-H opened a new understanding of the county fair and the love of fair competition.

Today, Nelson belongs to three 4-H groups: Orkies Camo Clan, a youth-run 4-H group mentored by Pat

Stewart; the Apple Hill Variety Club, which focuses on all animals, mentored by Jaci Fitzgerald; and a new 4-H club, the Jolly Rogers, mentored by Nelson's mom. The Jolly Rogers is a 4-H activity group which is still building its membership. The group is waiting until after

the fair to start its activities which will focus on field trips and outings, camp fires and fun get-togethers along with community volunteer activities.

"The Orkies Camo Clan is totally kid run," Nelson said.

Continued on page 5B

4-H Continued from page 5B

got reserve last year and sold for \$100.

Nelson will be showing a calf for the first time this year -- which he is very excited about. He will be showing his pigs and calf on Tuesday, his rabbits on Wednesday and he will be offering to auction the pig and rabbits during the Alcona Junior Livestock Club Market Sale on Thursday at 6 p.m.

Nelson uses the money earned from his market sales to purchase the animals he will raise for next year's fair and for food and supplies to care for the animals. Nelson's mom said he does spend a little of the money on something fun, because he worked really hard making it, but like most 4-H'rs at the market sale, the money Nelson has left is tucked away in savings for college.

Nelson thinks 4-H is a good thing for kids to do. He's gotten to know a lot of friends and they have fun helping each other. His mom likes that 4-H offers a variety of clubs which cover just about any interest a youngster might have. It also offers a lot of different things for kids like camps, field trips and scholarships.

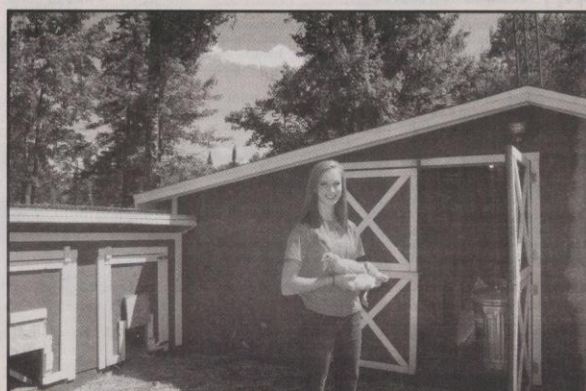
Madison's Story

Every day confident and poised Madison Lane hops on a golf cart and heads next door to her grandfather's house. Madison loves seeing her grandfather, Ken Short, but she is looking forward to more than a visit. She is on a mission to feed, brush and spend time with Dante a 13 year old half quarter, half paint horse.

Madison is 14-years-old and her long auburn hair matches her horse's coat. "I guess I'm partial to the color," Madison said beaming with pride while holding on to her well groomed and very handsome four legged friend. Madison said that sometimes she will bring her homework to the barn and read her books aloud to the horse while studying or sing to the horse, just so he can hear her voice and not feel lonely.

Madison got Dante three years ago just a month before the fair. "They said he wouldn't be ready and I wouldn't be used to him enough to show by the fair, but I did show him and he did very, very well. I've shown him at the fair and other competitions. I never had a horse before Dante but I belonged to 4-H.

"I started 4-H with just rabbits and then they were



Madison Lane and the chicken she will be showing at this year's Alcona County Fair.

handing out books and I was handed a horse book. I told them I don't do horses, even though I had ridden horses, I didn't have my own. They said they would find me a horse by (the) fair," she said.

"We were looking for a push button horse which is a beginner horse that does everything you say, when you say it and it does it nicely without

attitude or being mean. We took a 4-H friend with us to Hale to see Dante and asked the owner to show us some of the things the horse could do and our friend told us 'that's a push button horse, that's the one you want,'" Madison said.

Madison knows caring for the horse is an every day responsibility and she works

hard getting him ready by doing ground work and riding him frequently. Madison also understands that a horse owner has to be ready for any unexpected thing as they can get sick very quickly and, usually, at the most inconvenient time.

"Last winter Dante had

Continued on page 7B

4-H Continued from page 4B

"We decide on everything. We basically run the meetings. We work with rabbits and do crafts and we go to the farmers market and we sell worm tea compost which makes money for the group."

The Apple Hill Variety Club meets every two weeks where Nelson said he learns to show rabbits, pigs, sheep, cattle, turkey and chickens. "We don't always have animals at the meeting. Sometimes we just talk about them. Sometimes Matthew MacMaster (a member of the group) brings out his turkey and anyone working with turkeys will work with Matthew's turkey.

I have taken my rabbits sometimes," Nelson said. He explained animal health and showmanship are frequent topics of discussion.

"I've learned you want to make sure your rabbit doesn't have malocclusion which is where the front teeth overlap the back teeth or their teeth are too long and they get up in the lip, it's just something messed up with their teeth," Nelson said as he described the affliction.

He went into great detail on the proper way to show a rabbit, from how to carry and display the animal along with numerous check points a

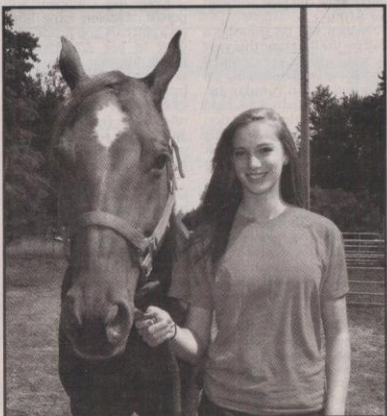
Judge will want him to show.

He also explained how to show a pig using a cane. He warned to not hit the pig in the hams with the cane or you'll bruise the meat, it's best to just tap him gently by the jowls or by the ear if you need to and only tap them to get them to move. "Pigs are pretty easy going and social," the pre-teen added.

Nelson said the most fun about 4-H and the fair is receiving big checks after selling a market animal. He said it is fun to talk with the other youth in the group and he explained how they help each other. Nelson enjoys spending time with the animals even when he's not showing them.

He mostly enjoys the competition. "It's trying to beat the other people by showing how good your animal is and how good of a showman you are," Nelson said. He is lucky to have his grandmother, Delores Schlichter, to help him care for the animals, but the older he gets he expects to have more responsibility.

Responsibility is not something 4-H kids shirk. Each youngster who shows or markets an animal at the fair must take barn duty for a one to two hour shift to help protect all the animals in the barn. Nelson's animals will



Dante, a half quarter/half paint horse, will be shown by his 14-year-old owner, Madison Lane, at the fair.

be housed in three different barns so he'll have to take three shifts of barn duty.

Nelson will be offering his pig, Chewbacca, at the market sale this year, along with a roaster rabbit named Han Solo and a pen of three rabbits. Last year was Nelson's

first year at the market club and he had the biggest pig at the fair which weighed 350 pounds and brought the young man \$900. He expects Chewbacca to weigh almost as much. His roaster rabbit

Continued on page 6B

4-H Continued from page 6B

colic -- which is like a belly ache -- and it was nine o'clock at night with ice on the ground. We had to have the vet out. I was in flip flops and shorts because I had just come from a volleyball game. I had to walk him around, it was cold but he finally got over it and continued on. It can just be anything with a horse, they can do anything at any time," she said.

Madison and Dante have competed many times and have won many ribbons including competitions sponsored by Northeastern Michigan Association of Horse Clubs.

Madison's chores don't end with the care of Dante. After she finishes with him she heads down the street to neighbors, Frank and Jenny Dimercurio, where she has her chicken housed in a quaint little red barn country coop along with the Dimercurio's chickens.

Madison takes care of the chickens along with the couple's two miniature donkeys and their two rescue horses when they are out of town. Madison calls the horses her project horses, as she helps train them or if the neighbors are having problems getting the horses to do something she will work with them.

"I help when they need to get the horses ready for their grandkids to ride or need to get the cart hooked up to the donkey. The Dimercurios just moved here permanently three or four years ago and they didn't know much about farm animals, so I go over sometimes and give them a hand," Madison said.

Madison's first experience with a chicken was when the Dimercurios thought they were getting four duck eggs to hatch and ended up with three ducks and a chicken. They named the ducks Huey, Dewey and Louie and the chicken was named Bob.

The neighbors pay Madison some money to spend with their animals and she uses that money for entrance fees for competitions and for extra supplies to help Dante look better for competition. She is grateful her parents, Sandy and Bob Lane, cover the major costs of Dante's feed, vet care and travel expenses and for her grandpa who houses the horse in his barn. She said in the winter she uses a four wheeler instead of the golf cart to get to grandpa's house and occasionally he helps take care of the horse.

Madison has belonged to two 4-H groups. She first started with Ace Riders, mentored by Shannon Joslin

and she is now with All Around Horses R Us mentored by Sue Schmitt.

"She says the 4-H clubs help her learn more about her animals and teaches her what behavior to expect from them and what is not normal. 4-H helps her figure out if her animals are sick and how to give them proper care. She also learns how much time she needs to spend with them every single day to get them ready for show.

"Showing your animals shows how hard you've worked with them and how much you've progressed," Madison said. She will be showing her chicken on Tuesday, her rabbit on Wednesday and her horse on Friday and Saturday during the fair.

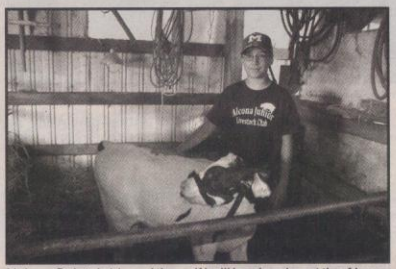
Madison thinks 4-H is a great opportunity and is happy there is a lot of socialization involved. "We have meetings almost every week now. We go out into the community and help clean the fairgrounds and do bake sales. We help a lot of people. We get to meet a lot of new people through shows and make friends with the vets so we know how to get hold of someone when we need them," Madison said.

Not only is Madison learning in 4-H, but she is also passing down what she has

learned to other youngsters in her group. "The older kids help the new kids by suggesting things for them to read and do. We might know the answer to a question, but we let them try to figure it out first," she said.

Madison said winning is not the most important thing although, it is nice to put a ribbon on your horse and take pride in the achievement. Mostly, she said, the fun comes from showing animals with friends. Madison competes a lot with her best friend, Keilee Elmer, a friend she's known since kindergarten. When she and Keilee compete they may not win any ribbons, but if the girls are the last two in the arena they will give each other a high five for a job well done and ride out together proudly.

"Even if you don't have the best horse you always tell yourself, my horse is the best, I have the million dollar horse, and you show it like that," Madison stated with confidence. Madison is looking forward to going to Alcona High School next year and joining the FFA. She will be taking a biology class and an agri-science class. She will also be taking a 4-H cooking and sewing class. She hopes to join the Alcona Junior Livestock Club Market Sale and auction some animals at next year's fair.



Nelson Quintel, 11, and the calf he'll be showing at the Alcona County Fair. This is Nelson's first year showing a calf.