

# **My 4-H Story**

## **08-09**

### **By Chase O'Byrne**

### **Cotton City 4-H Club**

### **Hidalgo County**

My name is Chase O'Byrne. I am thirteen years old. I am in the eighth grade at Animas Middle School. This was my fifth year in the Cotton City 4-H Club.

I could compare this year to my dirt bike trail. It had the easy straight stretches, dips and bumps, curves and turns, and every now and then an unexpected obstacle would stop me in my tracks.

I started the year off like others in the past, signing up for all my favorite projects. Market Swine, Market Goat, Goat Production, Welding, Woods and Tools, and this year, I added Arts and Crafts. In our area, there are not a lot of resources for leaders. I have come to rely on my parents, sister, and grandpa as my project leaders.

You would think as the year started out, I would have had an easy straight stretch. No, I hit an obstacle that stopped me right in my tracks. My grandpa who helps me with the majority of my projects had a heart attack. He had to have open-heart surgery. At that point, I took my own curve and decided I had to turn all my attention to helping him and taking care of our goat herd that we are in business in together. I took over the care of all the goats; and that time of year is when we put the billies in with the nannies to breed. I also went over every morning before school to do chores and gave up football and basketball to do the chores in the evening. Things began to get easier; less dips and bumps, curves and turns until spring came around. The babies began being born. We had some nannies that had a hard time giving birth. My grandpa set me down and we researched how to pull a baby goat. I was the only one with a small enough hand/arm to do the job. I ended up pulling eleven babies during the season. Since I helped them into the world, I was hoping to show one of them in the fall. None of them really turned out to be show quality. I did end up showing two of my goats, placing 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. I also kept one of the billy babies for a ram for future breeding.

Also, during the spring, I went to a sale and purchased two pigs. I also bought one from a 4-H member in another county who is beginning to have a breeding program. I know how much work goes into having your own business and raising your own show animals. My parents and I improved our pig pens this year so when the rains came, the pens would not flood. The only problem was, we did not get the summer rains to see if it worked. I spent a lot of time with my pigs, getting them ready for show this year. I again ran in to an obstacle. One of my pigs would not eat, so he was not gaining correctly to be in the class I hoped for. He placed last in the

lightweight class. I placed 5<sup>th</sup> with the pig I bought from my friend, and third with my heavyweight, making the sale with him.

During the summer, I worked on my other projects – welding, wood, and arts and crafts. My grandpa who usually helps me at the shop with these projects was having his own dips and bumps, curves and turns. It took some time, but I got them all finished with his supervision. I welded a cross on a plate of metal, and attached a stand to it. With it, I received two firsts and one second place.

I made a wooden box with a hinged lid. I welded a nameplate to attach to the front. For my arts and crafts project, I cut a figure out of stainless steel, and welded it to a stand. I placed first with these two projects at all the fairs.

My ride this year taught me to be responsible, watch what is on my trail, and not take the freedom of the ride for granted. I am thankful every day for my family to help me through the dips and bumps, curves and turns, and be there to pick me up when an obstacle stops me from my journey.