

When a Blue Ribbon Boy takes on 4-H in Rio Arriba County

By Jonathan Salazar

Novice 4-H Member

Rio Arriba County

2007 Junior 4-H Essay Winner

I am Jonathan Salazar and I am 9 years old. I attend Chamisa Elementary in White Rock, NM. I live with my mom, step-dad and abuelito. My mom is LeAnne Salazar-Montoya and my dad is Jemuel Montoya. My abuelito is Leroy Salazar. I don't have any brothers or sisters but I have a lot of pets. I have 2 dogs, 3 horses, 19 sheep, and a lot of chickens, 2 cows and 2 cats. I live in Tierra Azul near Medanales, NM. I am a member of the 4-H club Osos Del Valle. I am a very active guy and I think that I am a very helpful person.

This was a very busy year in 4-H for me. I was involved as the club vice-president and I did several projects. The projects that I enjoyed the most were entomology, my swine project, my lamb project and especially my photography project.

One of the most educational projects I had this year was my lamb project. I attended the 2007 New Mexico Livestock School for a week at the New Mexico State Fair Grounds. I learned a lot about lambs. I learned how to prepare them for the fair and how to shear my sheep. Afterward, I learned all about showmanship. This was a big responsibility and it cost my family a lot of money. I was proud to be the only one from Rio Arriba County. I think I represented our county well. I also made a lot of friends from all over the state. I recently read about my friend Jason Pugmire that was my partner at lamb school and he won Grand Champion

Steer at the NMSF and he made \$42,000. I think that is cool and I am glad that I made friends with a nice guy like Jason.

I REALLY enjoyed entomology. My mom and I went down to the ranch and while my mom drove the 4-Wheeler, I caught bugs and insects. It was cool and fun. Sometimes I didn't know what the bugs were, but mom helped me look them up in books and the internet. I can't wait for next year. My favorite bug was the Jerusalem Cricket that I found in my front yard.

Photography was cool too. My grandma bought me a new digital camera for Christmas and I really had fun with this project. I took my camera everywhere I went. I really got some good pictures. I took pictures at county camp, in my yard, hunting and all over the county. I am most proud of my pictures that won at the state level. My picture of a snow hare rabbit got first place at the state fair and my picture of Abiquiu got a spot in the 2008 New Mexico 4-H calendar.

My wildlife project was so much fun. I got to learn about all sorts of cool stuff. I learned about different animal tracks and the different life zones in New Mexico. But my favorite part was using my hunter safety skills and hunting for my first bear!

My leather craft and my rifle project were pretty neat too. I helped my friend Marcus on his leather craft and I taught some of the club members how to use leather crafting tools. My dad took me and my friend Marcus out to teach us about rifle safety and he even put some eggs out on the hill for us to shoot at. It was so much fun. I hope to compete in the shooting sports next year.

My biggest challenge this year was my swine project. I never thought that I could succeed at showing a pig. I named my pig Bacon and he was A LOT of work. Sometimes I had to ask my family to help out. He made much bigger messes than my lamb did. I was a little scared to shave him and to give him his first bath, but my abuelito called up another 4-Her and he really helped me out. Enrique came over to my house and showed me how to give my pig a bath and he and his dad helped me shave him and get him ready for the fair. When the time came to show Bacon I was a little scared, but Bacon surprised us all. He was better behaved than my lamb. I thought my lamb would be easier to show but that wasn't true. My lamb didn't do well in the ring, he froze in the ring, but Bacon did a GREAT job. We really worked well together and I was saddest when I sold him.

I learned that you can never be too prepared. I thought that I had done everything there was to do to get my lamb ready for the fair even though I thought he wouldn't make weight. My pig I thought was hard to deal with and I thought it would definitely make weight. But in the end my lamb made weight and my pig didn't. I thought that my lamb would be easy to show and that my pig would be a challenge, but in the end it was the other way around.

I also learned that what goes around comes around. Enrique came to help me learn about pigs and I helped another 4-Her, Matthew, learn about lambs. I helped him shear all of his sheep and get ready for the fair. At the fair I helped my buddy Christopher and my friend Marcus and in return a lot of people helped me out. 4-Hers like Michelle, Enrique and the Sandoval family helped me at the fair along with my own family.

4-H has been fun and I really have learned a lot. It has helped me be a better person and I have made a lot of new friends. I have also been able to get together with old friends. 4-H has taught me a lot about friendship, responsibility and respect. I think my family is proud of me for what I have accomplished this year. I know that the other members of my club look up to me, even the older members, because all year I was told that a Novice couldn't win and yet I proved those people wrong. I won the Crystal Julian Buckle, I won a place in the 2008 State 4-H calendar and I won a trophy at the county fair. I think that believing in myself has been the best part of 4-H. My family thinks that I have learned a lot about responsibility even though they think I have a ways to go in that area.

4-H is great and I can't wait until next year. I already have so much that I want to do. I just think that I need to do a little more for my community. I want to spread the word about diabetes so that other kids do not end up like Crystal J.