

4-H Story: The Last Chapter

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Age 17

Cotton City 4-H

Hidalgo County

Have you ever started reading a book and skipped to the last chapter to find out the ending? I am so glad that in my 4-H book, I was not able to fast forward to find the ending in the last chapter. I might have not enjoyed the fun, action, adventure, romance, and friendships that I have experienced in the beginning and middle chapters.

During my early chapters, I began setting the plot for the whole book. I enrolled in various projects, anything from sewing and animals to welding and shooting sports. Some were my favorite, and I stuck with them over time. I became an officer for my club, joined the action with committees, and took on the adventures of Youth Get-Away, County Contest, and District Contest. I made friendships that have lasted until the last chapter of my book.

Now is the time to skip through all the chapters and read the ending, ten years in the writing. This year, I received many awards that I have worked for throughout the years – New Mexico Delegate for National Congress through my state record book, state gold home economics award/letter, high point individual in fashion magic at State Conference, senior swine showmanship, swine herdsman, and all around senior showman.

Setting goals and working to achieve them is a big part of my book. Receiving an award or recognition is the ultimate to reaching a goal. Over time, those ribbons will fade and trophies will break, but the real rewards are the lessons you learn along the way to receiving those awards and recognition.

Through the years, I have served as many club offices, working my way up the list to become the president. This was my year. The first meeting of the year, I was elected as club president. To be able to serve and return all that I had learned in previous years was a great honor. During my previous chapters, there have always been older members to help me and set an example. I have watched them in admiration and hoped that I could provide the same for the young members in my club. I wanted to accomplish this with the new role as Cotton City 4-H Club President. I worked with my leaders to provide fun, action, and adventure for the other members to write about in their own book.

Being club president gave me the opportunity to run once again for county council president. I was elected to that role again for the third time. Once the officers were elected, we had a celebration for a member's special day. Happy birthday dear Dallas, Happy birthday to ... BEEP BEEP BEEP – the fire alarms went off. We all started laughing. The cake with lit candles was directly under the fire alarm. We had to call the fire department to turn the alarms off in the building. Nothing like starting a new year out with bells and whistles.

Choosing my projects for this year was as simple as taking the ones I have grown to enjoy over the past chapters: Market Swine, Market Goat, Goat Production, and Clothing.

Going to the auction to pick out my pigs for the year has become an annual adventure with another 4-H family. Both families go up the night before the sale, check out the animals, go to dinner, and of course there is swimming at the motel. Market Swine is probably my second favorite project. Pigs have such a personality. Most people think pigs have a foul odor, but really, they do not stink if you clean the pens on a daily basis. This year, I spent a lot of time with my three pigs, working with their feed to get them to the weights I desired. I wanted to have one pig in each weight class. It paid off come fair time. I had one pig in each class. I received two blue ribbons and a third place ribbon. I was awarded the senior swine showmanship award and swine herdsman.

Action and adventure was a common occurrence during the year with my goat project. I went into business three years ago with my brother and papa. This past year my papa got sick and most of the work landed with my brother and me. Through the past chapters of my book, I have learned responsibility and taking the lead. It paid off this year. In the fall, we had to move the billies in with the nannies, keep them from jumping from pen to pen to assure we would have babies in the spring. When spring came around, the babies started hitting the ground running. My brother and I worked hard to make sure they all were eating good and stayed warm. I picked out a baby for the county fair from a nanny I had showed two years prior. I placed third with him. Being in business with my family has helped to bring me closer to them.

My clothing project this year was fashion magic/clothing coordination. Throughout the years, I have learned to sew, mend, and purchase clothes on a budget. This year, I learned to purchase an item of clothing to coordinate with items in my wardrobe. Since I love clothes, this was a great project for me. I bought and coordinated an outfit that I could use at a workplace or for an interview. I placed first at county contest, county fair, state fair, and regional fair. During the summer, I competed at State Conference, placing first place and high point individual. With these awards, I will be able to compete at the national level in Denver, Colorado, in January. This will be an adventure that will make a memory of a lifetime.

Just as the pages turn, years go by and all good things must end, but leaving you wanting more. My 4-H career has been by far the best time of my life. The life lessons I have learned and the friendships I have made have made me become the young woman I am today. Thinking back on all of my experiences, I would not change anything I have done! Thank you to all of my family, friends, leaders, and supporters. I hope that my experiences made an impact on you, just as you have made a lasting impact on things I have done, and will do in the future.