

## GROW WITH EXTENSION

# Virtual horse judging for 4-H



**Lloyd Singleton**

I grew up with horses in my life. My family kept a horse at our rural home before the move to the St. Louis suburbs. My siblings were school-age and I was the baby. Our horse, Siva, was so gentle that for horse sale auction day, 4-year-old Lloyd gave a solo ride. Siva was named by reversing the letters in Uncle Avis' name, the horse-whisperer of the family. Avis raised quarter horses to help manage his "forested" cattle in the hilly Ozarks. A tall man with his pointy boots, shiny belt buckle and Stetson hat, this favorite uncle always had a pony ready to saddle up for us kids to ride. The ride always culminated in instructed participation for the cool-down and grooming of the kind animal, a truly great experience for youth.

Some youth in New Hanover County get to have horses in their life through an active 4-H Horse Club. 4-H is North Carolina's largest youth development organization, equipping young people to learn by doing. The local club started about a year ago and has been able to join in some NC State University (NCSU) Equine Husbandry competitions this year. Starting off the year competing in the Southeastern district Hippology contest, they won second place. (If you need to stop to look up Hippology, that's encouraged). This was followed by study, practice and participation in the state competition.

Each year, 4-H members across North Carolina spend hours preparing for the annual state 4-H Horse Judging Contest held in Raleigh each Spring. With the coronavirus outbreak, organizers of this year's contest "galloped" into action to deliver the first-ever virtual horse judging. For New Hanover County 4-H member, Lydia Wilson, the virtual contest was an excellent alternative for her to put all the



**4-H Club members at their last meeting before coronavirus at Open Hands Farm, Castle Hayne.** [CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]

preparation to use. The 4-H Horse Judging Contest provides an opportunity to teach participants good conformation (structural correctness, balance, and muscling), breed character, and performance ideals in different breeds of horses. Additionally, the contest teaches participants how to evaluate horses based on knowledge and fact, make a decision, and defend it. The participants use horsemanship terms in a logical, systematic way to defend placings. Lydia tuned into several Zoom meetings to learn specific methods. Competing as

a Senior rookie, Lydia took sixth place out of 23 contestants. She reports that she is glad she took part and is ready for next year.

The NCSU Equine Husbandry offers many more competitions for the club including writing contests, photography, art, and an upcoming virtual Horse show where the members can submit videotaped rides. So far, Lydia has entered 3 horses for 3 disciplines for the competition. There is an in-real-life advantage to a virtual horse show; you don't have to haul a horse or pay for stalling or compete

in an arena with other horses. A contestant gets to video their own ride at their own barn in a controlled environment.

This 4-H program helps youth members develop leadership abilities, build character, and assume responsibility. Developing an appreciation of horse-back riding as recreation, learning skills in horsemanship and increasing knowledge of safety and respect for working with animals will help youth become better prepared for citizenship responsibilities. Perhaps Lydia has a future degree and career in Horse

Husbandry. If so, I know just the University to recommend.

To learn more about 4-H and/or the 4-H horse program in New Hanover County, contact New Hanover County Cooperative Extension office, visit <https://newhanover.ces.ncsu.edu/> or contact J. Scott Enroughty, 4-H agent at 910-798-7660 or via email, [scott\\_enroughty@ncsu.edu](mailto:scott_enroughty@ncsu.edu).

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