

4-H helped shape one member's life and family

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pigs and grows entries for the flower and garden classes.

The organization has in some ways become the foundation of April's marriage and family life. She said she met Doug through 4-H.

The summer after she graduated from high school in Goodland, April said, she won Grand Champion in beef showmanship and qualified for the Tri-State Royal, a post-fair contest in Goodland for 4-H champions across the Tri-State area.

April said Doug, who grew up in Kanorado, asked if he could help her prepare her steer for the contest. She said she didn't know him well, but still accepted his offer.

April said she thinks Doug had two motives. First, he wanted to date her and second, he genuinely wanted to help because he loves working with animals. She said Doug, who is five years older than her, hadn't been involved in 4-H for a few years and was looking for a reason to participate again.

They grew close, she said, because of their shared love of animals.

"We just have a true, deep love for animals," April said. "It's something you don't see in kids today. They don't have that I've-got-to-be-out-there-with-them-day-and-night attitude."

The couple's love for animals grew into love for each other, and after April attended the Colorado Institute of Art in Denver for a few months, she returned to marry Doug.

The couple currently lives in Ruleton and Doug farms south of



April Hall with her son Michael and husband Doug.

Photo by Rachel Hixson/The Goodland Daily News

Kanorado.

April said she's happy where she is because she's got too much country in her to fit in the city.

"I've basically been a farm girl all of my life," she said. "I always would have rather been out helping my dad, grand-dad and brother with the farming. I hated working inside."

April said she and Doug have been actively involved in 4-H since they were married in February 1977.

Doug will bend over backwards to help any 4-H member, she said, or in fact anyone who works with animals. April said they used to travel to Leoti, where Doug's brother was a vocational

agriculture teacher, to show the students in the Future Farmers of America club how to properly groom cattle before the fair.

"I don't know which he likes better," April said, "working with the animals or helping the kids work with the animals."

She said working on 4-H projects keeps their family close.

April said she saves up her vacation days each year until fair week in August.

Some people say she's crazy to spend her vacation at the fair, but April says she can't think of a better way to spend free-time.

"Where would you go that you could be together that much?" she asked.

She does admit fair week can be exhausting.

"You're up at 4 a.m. to wash the animals and feed them before a show," she said, "and you don't get to bed before 11:30."

April said 4-H is really a family activity because it takes an entire family to get projects ready for the fair. Like most 4-Hers, Michael just doesn't have enough time to properly care for all of his animals, so April said she helps feed and walk the critters.

"It takes a full family to pull off showing at the fair," she said. "The kids can't be there 24 hours, it takes parents to help feed animals. Most kids can't handle a steer by themselves, it takes adult supervision."

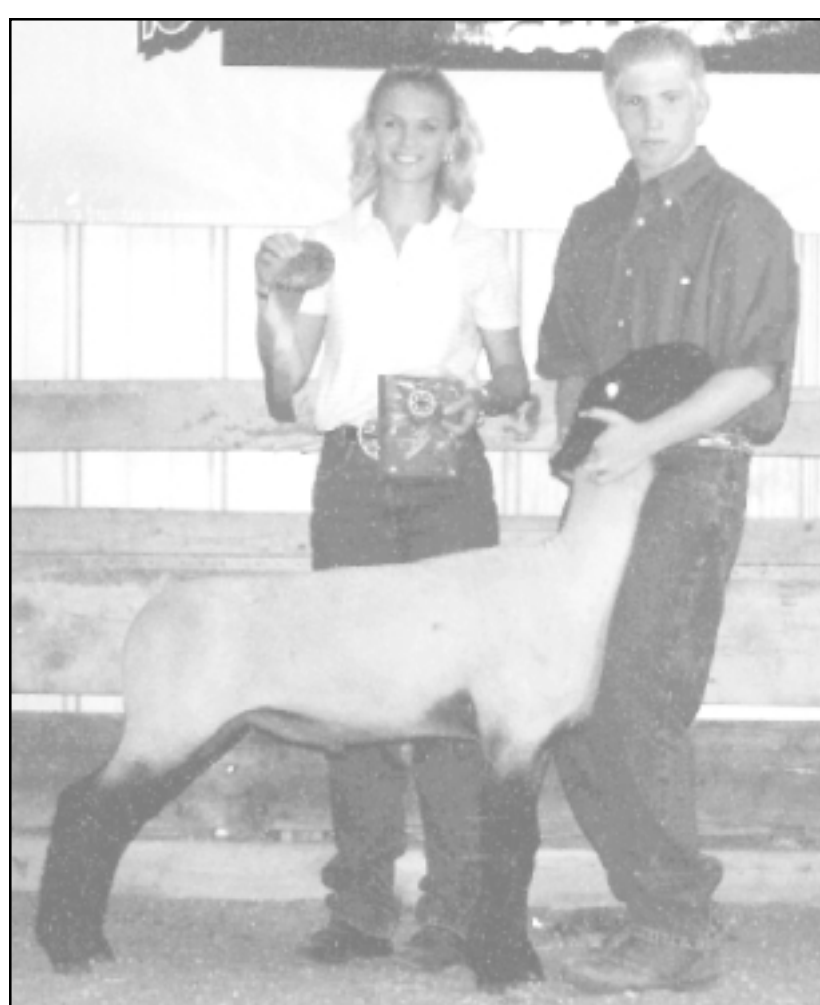
April said 4-H helps parents pass on life skills to their children. She said 4-H members learn responsibility and accountability because if a project fails it's their fault. They also learn social skills and how to speak publicly, she said.

Because she had to present projects to crowds and remain cool under pressure during her 4-H days, April said public speaking doesn't bother her at all.

"I'm not a bit afraid of talking in front of people," April said. "I can talk in front of 5,000 people."

Although Doug and April have never been 4-H club leaders, they do as much as they can to help the organization.

"We're both kind of don't-put-me-in-charge-but-I'll-do-the-work people," she said.



Michael Hall with his Grand Champion lamb last year and Tammy Weeter, the sheep project leader.

She said Doug was on the Sherman County Fair Board for about nine years and she was a member of the extension council executive board for a three-year term.

April said for her 4-H means family

time. It's hard work sometimes, she said, but it's all worth it in the end.

"It's seeing Michael's accomplishments," she said, "and other kids' accomplishments. Watching the kids glow at the fair."

Former 4-Her says program teaches a lot

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enough. Franklin said 4-H members learn a lot from doing projects and learn about competition.

She learned about winning and losing from 4-H rather than from sports, Franklin said, since there were no girls' sports when she was in school.

"It's one of the life-long lessons," Franklin said, "winning and losing — you live either way."

It's sometimes more important and more difficult to learn to win graciously than to lose graciously, she said.

Franklin said her mother was a cooking leader for a long time, and she was a cooking leader when her kids were in 4-H. She said she made her kids take cooking because it is something everyone can learn from.

"Sarah (her daughter) had a roommate who asked for a recipe to brown hamburger," Franklin said. "It's amazing how many people have no knowledge about cooking."

Members learn to say "thank you," she said, and to write thank you notes.



She said they also learn good work ethics, how to be community leaders, how to keep records and responsibility.

"If you say you're going to do something," she said, "you do it."

There are also opportunities to learn about public speaking, she said. For a lot of kids, answering roll call is their first experience with public speaking.

Franklin told a story of a girl who would cry when her name was called during roll call because she was afraid to speak up in the group.

The first time she answered roll call, Franklin said, the whole club was behind her.

"They all said, 'YES!!!" she said.

It was a good example of the team spirit and camaraderie in 4-H, she said.

Franklin said she believes in the 4-H motto, "To make the best better" and

thinks it's important to laugh and have a good time.

Franklin said she remembers the adults who worked with 4-H and the effort they expended.

"I want to thank those who made 4-H such a good thing for me," she said. "I hope they keep doing it for all the kids."

"I would like to think I have had an impact on ones I've helped"

Franklin's warmth and enthusiasm carry over into her family life. She has a large plaque above the French doors in the kitchen that says, "Live well, laugh often, love much." She said that is her family motto.

As much as she loves her family, Franklin said she doesn't suffer from empty-nest syndrome.

"I don't understand people who

think their kids should stay here," Franklin said. "There are two things you can give your kids — roots, so they always have a place, and wings to fly away."

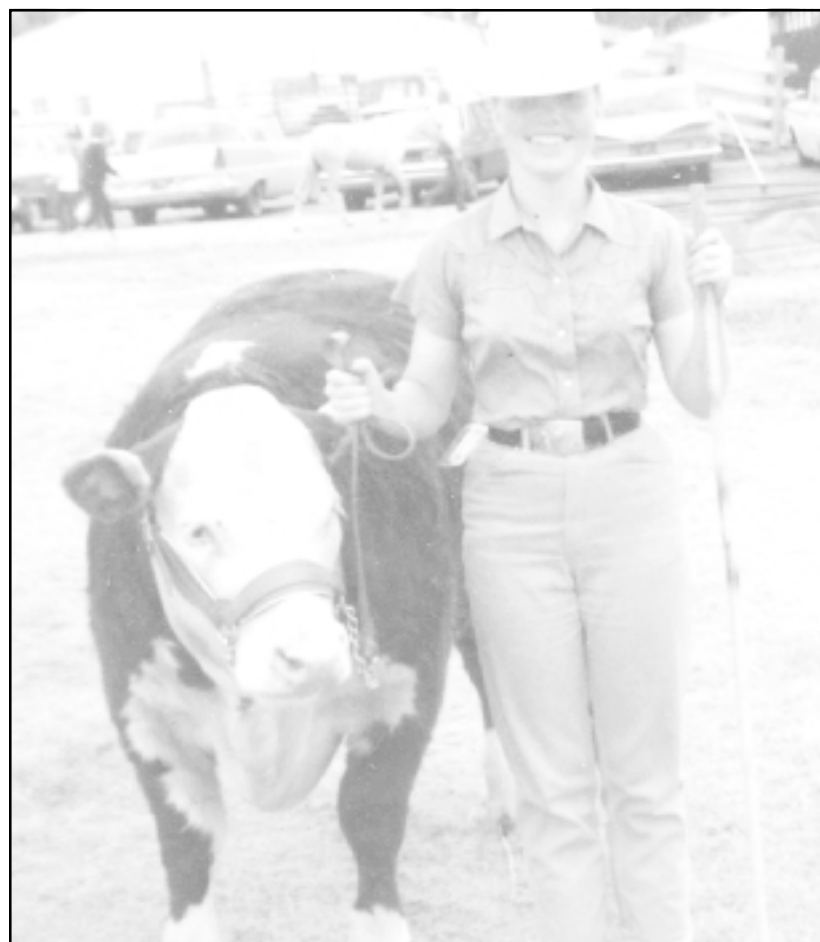
Her children are Kyle, a "manufacturing integrator" for Lockheed Martin Aeronautics in Fort Worth.; Sarah, a quality control chemist in the bake laboratory at Cargill in Minneapolis, Minn.; and Tim, a sophomore at Kansas State University.

Franklin was in 4-H for 11 years, and her children were in the club for at least 10 each. Her parents are Freda and the late Harlan House.

Franklin said she graduated from high school in 1966, and then went to Kansas State University. She worked in Kansas City, Denver and Houston before she and Gerald married.

He worked in the school system in Salina and Hutchinson, she said, and when their two older children were young, they moved to her parents' farm southeast of Goodland.

"My dad offered the opportunity to farm," she said. "We decided to try it for three years. That was 21 years ago."



Linda Franklin with a steer in her 4-H days.

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