

# Goodland girl seventh in the rodeo world

By Kathryn Burke

*The Goodland Star-News*  
At 4 feet tall and 60 pounds, 8-year-old Nicole Sederstrom has already mastered control of an animal more than 18 times her size, a horse named Charlie.

The pint-sized blonde has not only mastered riding, she has taken her place as seventh in the world in flag racing at the Little Britches Rodeo Association's national competition.

Nicole and Charlie went to Pueblo, Colo., last month to compete against kids in her age group from around the world, but mostly in North America.

They spent the week participating in four events, flag racing, pole bending, barrel racing and goat-tail untying.

Nicole is no stranger to riding. As a baby, she went riding with her father Greg on a horse named Moon.

At 3, she took the reins herself, and her parents say, the third grader has been in love with horses ever since.

Nicole said she isn't particular about color, size or shape, but says the horse's personality is key.

In the competition last month, she won five belt buckles.

"Her goal was just to win one buckle," said her mother as she and her daughter surveyed a table full of the wearable rodeo trophies.

She plans to wear her five belt buckles everywhere. Amy said Nicole has worked out a system to allow everyone in the family to rotate the buckles.

"She's gonna let us all wear them," she said.

Nicole beat the odds, winning the buckles on a strange horse.

Her regular horse, Cactus, was hurt on July 10, just two weeks before the competition.

That gave her little time to get used to Greg's old rope horse, Charlie. The two made friends quickly, though.

"They got along really well," said Amy.

Not only was she using her



Nicole Sederstrom practiced goat tying on her own feet as she readied for next year's round of rodeo competitions.  
Photo by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News

father's horse, she was following in his footsteps in the Little Britches Rodeo. Greg competed as a kid and has a shelf full of buckles of his own.

In the competition, Nicole rodeoed twice a day every day for the entire week.

Monday, July 25, she competed in goats and barrel races; Tuesday, pole bending; and Wednesday flag racing for the first "go-around," the preliminary round. Wednesday night, the second go came up and she did flag racing, Thursday pole bending and Friday goats for the second. Saturday was a short round where only the top 15 kids in each competition participated in each

event. Nicole was grouped in the 5-7 age range, although she has now turned 8.

Next year, she moves up into the 8-13 range, which means she will have to learn new events: goat tying and others, but some old favorites will remain.

"I'll do poles and barrels all my life," she said.

The Little Britches rodeo works just like professional rodeos, and participants have to earn a spot in the competition.

Nicole said she had to place in the top seven in at least two rodeos over the year to go to the world competition.

She actually had more wins, and more points, that necessary.

Throughout the year, she said, Nicole has competed at rodeos in Lakin and Cimarron, and Burlington, Castle Rock and Colorado Springs, Colo.

Nicole said she went into the world competition thinking she was going to place in the goat-tail competition because it's her best event. She was surprised to do so well in the flag race.

Heading out on the rodeo circuit takes a lot of time and effort. Amy said Nicole is out with her horse all the time.

"It takes a lot of practice," she said.

## Events target tikes

Tiny Nicole Sederstrom participates in four events at Little Britches Rodeo Association competitions, flag racing, pole bending, barrel racing and goat-tail untying.

For flag racing, the blonde 8-year-old rides a horse from one end of the arena to the other, where two barrels are set up. She has to take a flag with her and put it in a bucket full of oats atop one barrel. Then she heads for the second barrel where she takes a flag out of another bucket and runs "home," or out of the arena. Judges measure accuracy and speed.

In pole bending, a rider weaves a horse in and out of a straight line of poles. This event is timed.

Nicole said it's hard because you have to have a lot of control over the horse.

Barrel racing, a popular rodeo event for women of all ages, features three barrels set up in a triangle at one end of the arena. The rider takes off and circles one of the barrels — she can choose either side — that make up the bottom corners of the triangle. Then



Sederstrom

she shoots across for the other barrel, circles it and heads for the third, the far tip of the triangle.

After rounding the last barrel, she "blazes home," or runs out the arena. Participants have to be careful to keep from tipping a barrel over — they lose points that way — but the competition is for the best time.

In goat-tail untying, kids ride into a ring, jump off of the horse and remove a ribbon from the tail of a goat, racing the clock.

Nicole said each time they practice, she makes sure she can do four clean runs, without a fault. She tries for a fast time, too.

Greg, who has more experiences with the events, does most of the coaching. Amy, a former high school and college track athlete, said she tries to help by going through the steps to ride. She said they break down the moves and work on techniques.

With a hair tie acting as a barrel and her hands as the horse, Nicole can demonstrate the best angle to have when she rounds a barrel.

She gets practice in competition, too, starting the season with rodeos just after Christmas.

At the national competition, Nicole got a buckle each for taking sixth place in the first and second "go" and seventh in the "short go" in flag racing. She won another buckle for taking second in the second go for goat tail untying. Adding up her points for the entire season for flag racing plus her scores in the final competition, she placed seventh in the world.

The week-long competition was not all work. Nicole said she got to hang out with other kids, riding bikes and camping out all week.

While rodeoing is in the family, Nicole said her brother Blaine, 5, isn't interested.

"He likes tractors," she said.

# High school's progress in math doesn't add up

By Kathryn Burke

*The Goodland Star-News*  
Students at Goodland High School did not measure up to a bar set by federal guidelines in math last year.

Monday, Aug. 8, school board members heard that the high school did not make "adequate yearly progress," the standard set by the federal No Child Left Behind law.

While the numbers for reading students were within the school's goals, mathematics fell below standard.

Scores for students receiving free and reduced-price lunches fell more than 40 percentage points below the mathematics target for last year.

Out of 30 students, only 20 percent, or 6 students, made the target.

For all high school students, the numbers were at proficient or above.

Central Principal Sharon Gregory, school improvement specialist for the district, said if the school fails in any category, it does not meet adequate yearly progress.

When a school or district fails to make progress two years in a row, said Gregory, they are put on "improvement." That means the school must set up a regulated plan to improve scores.

Already, she added, each school has an improvement plan.

After several years of not making progress, she said, they could see cuts in state and federal money allotted to the district.

"Last spring we saw those issues in math," she said.

Working with math teachers at the high school, Gregory and Harvey Swager, high school principal, asked the board approve two new math classes, Standards I and Standards II. The classes will start this fall.

The two classes, she said, will help teachers focus on elements required by the state assessment tests.

The high school also failed to make adequate yearly progress in graduation rates for students receiving free and reduced-price lunches.

The school had a 72.2 percent graduation rate, 2.8 percent below the target of 75 percent. The number was down 20 percentage points from last year.

Gregory said the drop in the graduation rate could be traced to several students who went to the downtown learning center. She said many of those will get a diploma, but since they didn't graduate with

their class, they could not be counted for graduation rates.

The state tests were administered online in March or April and results were available almost immediately.

"So we know right away," Gregory said, adding that the official numbers did not come in until recently.

State assessment tests, she said, began with minimum adequacy tests, but the state raised the bar to encourage students to do better. That bar, she said, may have been raised too high in last year's test. The test for this year is reportedly somewhere in the middle, she said.

She said to count towards the school's numbers, students must be in Goodland schools by the official state county day of Sept. 20. Any student who enrolls after that date is tested but not counted for the school's progress.

## corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors.

## District scores meet federal standards

While Goodland High School did not meet the federal standards for last year, the school district did.

Central, West and North grade schools and Grant Junior High all made adequate yearly progress last year as defined by federal and state rules.

Since West students don't take the state assessment tests — they're not required of those grades — the school used math data from Central and reading from North to measure its progress.

All Central students in fourth grade exceeded yearly progress, having 4.7 percent more students proficient in math or above.

At North, the number of students proficient or above in reading was 69.6 percent, or 6.2 percent above the target of 63.4 percent. Fifth grade students take the reading test.

Seventh and eighth graders at North made adequate yearly progress in both math and reading.

For reading, 71.4 percent of eighth graders were proficient or above, 8 points above the target.

In math, the seventh graders were at 53.5 percent

proficient or above, which is below targets. The school still made progress because of a formula designed to ensure that one student can't make the difference between pass and fail.

The assessment tests are graded on a scale of proficiency. The highest is advanced, followed by exemplary, proficient, basic and unsatisfactory. The scale could be correlated to A, B, C, D and F but Sharon Gregory, Central principal, said the state doesn't like that.

Next year all students in grades three through eight and high school sophomores will take the math test. Grades three through eight and high school juniors will take reading.

She said each school has an improvement plan and goes over the figures each year. Teachers get together and take an in-depth look at the numbers to target specific areas in the classroom and tailor programs to students' needs.

Gregory said the federal No Child Left Behind law will require schools to be 100 percent proficient or above by the year 2013.

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