

Senior busy with projects

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP

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Matthew Helm is a very busy kid.

On top of being a senior in high school this year, he's looking into colleges, tending a massive garden, shooting photographs and brushing up on his buymanship for the 4H projects he's submitting to the Decatur County Fair.

"My dad was actually in 4-H as a boy, so he and my mom had all of us in it growing up," he said. "I like it; it has its ups and downs, but this was actually my last year doing projects because I'll be off to college next year. I'll actually still be in 4-H, but not doing the fair or anything."

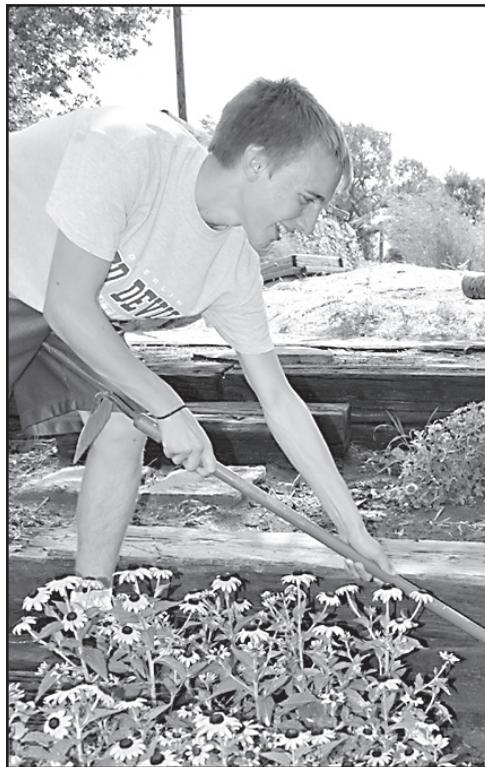
He pointed out the various vegetables, fruits and flowers that grew in the garden that occupies almost the entire yard of his family's home in Norcatour. On different levels were peonies, roses, squash, corn and pear trees. He said that some were pickled and some were canned, but most of it they ate fresh every day.

Matthew is now a counselor at the 4-H camp, and when asked what the best part of the club is, he said it's working with the kids.

"My favorite part actually used to be wood-working," he said, talking from his easy chair in the cool air conditioning of his living room. "When I was younger, I liked building. We used to live in the other house (on this property) while we were working on this house, and I'd help my dad do different things. We laid down all the floors, and my mom did the trim. We painted the walls, but someone else came in to texture them."

He said this casually, but looking around the beautiful home, it was hard to imagine anyone other than a family of master craftsmen completing such a task.

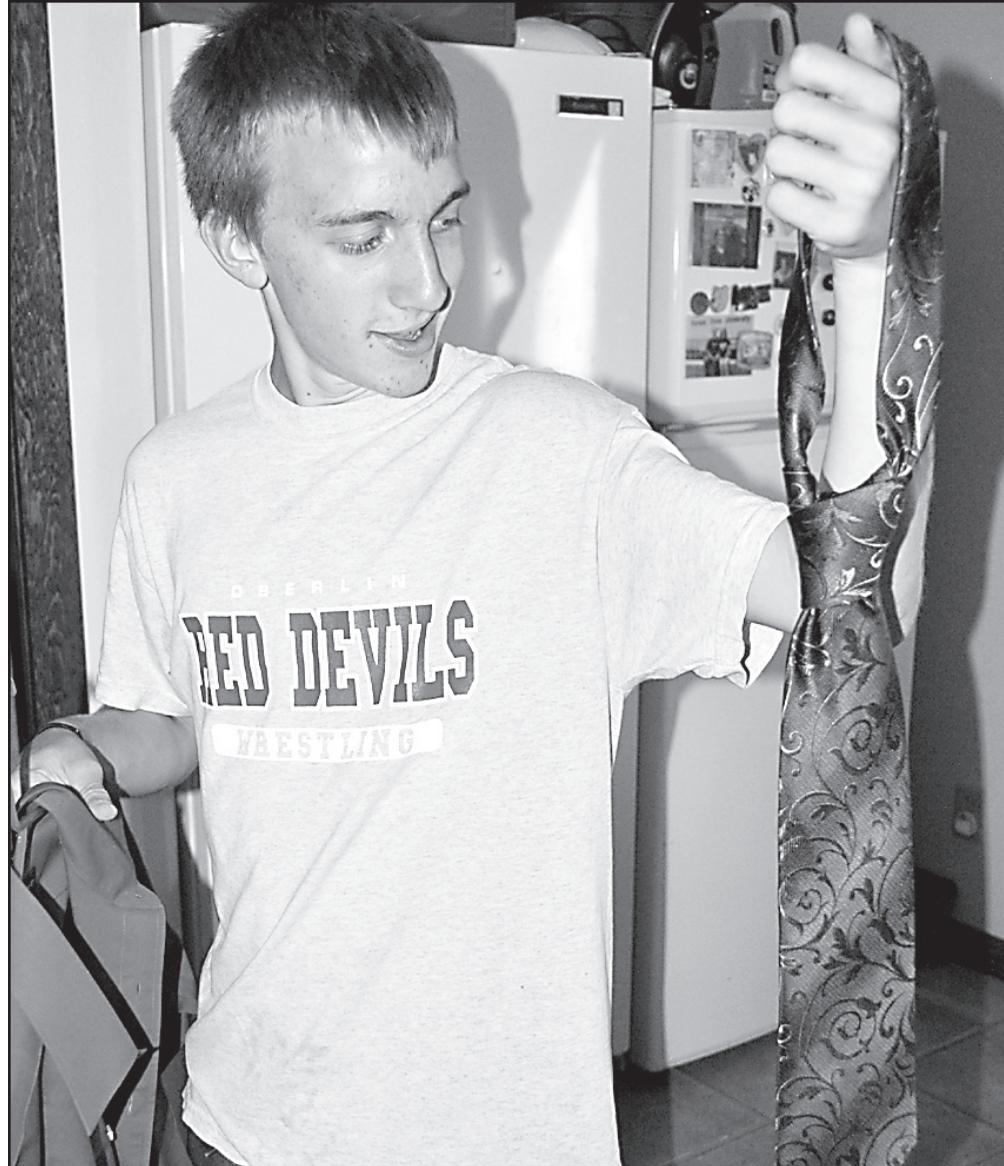
"Now it's different though, I'm a counselor at the camp myself, and as a counselor it's re-



ally fun helping the younger kids do whatever they're doing in camp. And then I get to do that stuff too. I'm still a camper even though I'm a counselor."

Matthew plans to join a branch of the armed forces after graduation, just as his two older brothers, Aaron and Jacob, have. Aaron Helm, 24, is a graduate of West Point, and Jacob Helm, 19, is in his second year of the Air Force academy. Matthew hasn't picked which one is for him yet.

"I've always wanted to be a part of the Army," he said, "but I've seen the Air Force academy



MATTHEW HELM went after a bull snake in his garden (left) and later showed off the shirt and tie he plans to wear in the 4-H buymanship revue at this year's fair (above).

— Herald staff photos by Stephanie DeCamp

and it looks kind of interesting, so then I thought, 'Well, if the Air Force is interesting, maybe the Navy is, too. Of course, a lot of people want me to go into the Navy just to round it off, because Aaron's in the Army and Jacob's in the Air Force.'

While his 4-H days are numbered, there's no lack of appreciation for what it has taught him.

"It's actually a really good thing about being from around here," he said, "how much you can do. You can do all this stuff, and nothing ever gets in the way of the other. You're constantly doing things, but it's not overwhelming. And it

looks really great on a college application."

So what is a boy like this, almost a man, most proud of?

"I guess I'd have to say the Key award. You get it for leadership. You do the same thing like with earning the 4-H medals, but it's just so much more. I mean, you have to get all but maybe three of the lower awards. I was actually surprised, looking back, how much I've done. Not necessarily just getting the Key award, but looking back on everything I've done, that was my proudest moment."

Enjoy the Decatur County Fair!

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