

## ***Community and Leadership***

Over the past few years I have had the privilege of knowing many people through the fair and 4-H. Those people have given me a wealth of knowledge, not only about livestock and how to properly care for, manage, and show them, but also, and perhaps even more so, what community and proper leadership are.

Almost seven years ago my family moved to Ventura County. We knew nobody, but we knew we wanted to get back into 4-H, so we went to the fair to watch the sheep show. While we were watching the show, we met someone who invited us to her club, which we gladly did the following month. The lamb leader from that club took us under her wing, introduced us to a breeder, helped us with showmanship, and gave all sorts of advice to ensure that we could and would succeed. Between her advice and that of my sister, I was able to win the first show I ever entered.

After two years of lambs, I decided that it was time to pursue my desire of showing steers, which I had had since I was about four years old. That same lamb leader introduced me to the best steer leader in the county, and perhaps the nation. Two months after the fair, he took me up to his dad's place to pick out a steer. I had hardly known him, but he took me anyway, because that's what project leaders do. Not only did he help me get a quality animal, but he also made sure I had a proper enclosure for him and the right feed. What made this all the more remarkable was the fact that this steer leader did all of this while my brother was in the hospital and my parents couldn't help. That help he gave paid dividends at the end of that year. I came home with a new silver buckle and a nice, fat check.

Over the next couple years I learned a lot more than how to show cattle from that leader. Almost every time he'd do something (or does something) with his cattle, he'd call me up and have me help him. He taught me how to freeze brand cattle, properly band and vaccinate calves, and even how to plant hay. In addition to that, anytime I have a cattle question, I can call him up and he'll help me get to the bottom of the issue.

Once I told one of my friends about how much I worked with my steer leader, and she asked me why I didn't count those hours into my service hour record. The short answer is that I never thought about doing that, but the truer answer is that it didn't seem like service hour work. To me it was, and is, neighbors helping neighbors. It's community. That kind of help is hardly found in the big city, but it runs rampant in the fair and wider ag community.

It was because of strong, selfless leaders like these that I was able to meet the challenge of leading a club through a pandemic as their vice president, and then their president. Admittedly it's not hard to host Zoom meetings every month and keep in touch with the events that affect the outcome of the year, but I had great examples. Although this is my last year as a youth exhibitor in 4-H, I know this is not the end. The

examples of community and leadership that have been shown to me in my time showing livestock at the fair have proven to me that it's time to reciprocate. I don't know where life will take me or what exactly I will do, but I do know that I will be involved in 4-H as an adult leader at the very least so that the next generations will know the same community and leadership that we all know and love.

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