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County extension offers residents a world of knowledge

PROGRAM IS MORE THAN CROPS AND LIVESTOCK

By *Rosanne Boyett*

Beacon Staff Writer

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A group of 12 equine enthusiasts will be heading to Albuquerque in less than two weeks.

The eight 4-H members and four chaperones will take part in a one-week horse training program at the state fairgrounds.

“The youngsters going to the horse school all bring their own animals for the training sessions,” said Chase Elkins, Cibola County 4-H agent. “The same is true for those attending the livestock school later this month.”

Horse owners can protect their animals from the equine herpes-one virus with an EHV-1 vaccination, according to Elkins.

“Livestock projects really help youngsters understand a number of production aspects,” said Elkins, NMSU-Grants’ Cibola County Cooperative Extension Service agricultural agent. “They have to purchase an animal, raise it and care for it and then be prepared for the animal to be sold to market. That can be hard for some youngsters because they have spent a lot of time with their animal and have really bonded with it.”

The training schools are just two opportunities offered by the area’s 4-H clubs.

Each year more than 120 club members participate in 14 training schools, which are three-seven day sessions. The cooking school held at Los Lunas is always very popular.

“The youngsters get to prepare different foods, preserve



This year’s ballet classes perform for an enthusiastic audience of community members. This is the program’s third year and 35 young 4-H members, ages 5 through 12 years, demonstrated their talents. “Ballet enhances the girls’ sense of discipline by teaching them to focus,” said Wendy Brown, Cibola County 4-H agent. “They have to concentrate on coordinating the mind and body during each dance.” The NMSU-Grants’ Cibola County Cooperative Extension Service provides numerous free programs and classes for people of all ages, according to Brown, the

fruits and vegetables and make jellies and jams – they love it,” said Wendy Brown, county home economist and CCCES director. “They learn the importance of good nutrition along with the hands-on experience that is part of working in the kitchen.”

“We (4-H) are much more than just programs,” stated Brown, “we are youth development.”

Youngsters’ activities are supervised by dedicated volunteers, their club leaders. The parents’ association hosts fundraising events to help pay the training schools’ registration fees, according to the director.

About 25 area youngsters are involved in the 4-H special needs’ programs, acknowledged Brown. The weekly gatherings at Future Foundations Family Center in Grants include arts and crafts projects, exercise, nutrition education classes and other activities.

She pointed out that many people believe 4-H as just animal and crop projects. But in the past three years Brown and Elkins have created several new opportunities for area youth.

“We started ballet classes in 2009 and that has been a real eye-opener,” explained Brown. “The largest group I’ve had is 45. This year there are 35 girls, five to 12 years old, in the class.”

All extension programs are free but ballet students must pay costume costs, clarified Brown.

“This program teaches youngsters discipline,” said the 4-H agent. “They have to be very focused and must concentrate on using the mind and body as one.”

Club members attend Ag Day each spring, participate in district contests, enter projects in the Cibola/McKinley Bi-County Fair and receive awards at the 4-H Achievement Day ceremony.

The director pointed out that in addition to 4-H activities, the extension staff offers a wide variety of educational opportunities for residents of all ages. Examples include adult classes in nutrition, family resource management, child development, family health and wellness plus several other programs.

Brown noted that she brings programs to community members. The home economist cited her work with Cibola County Correctional Center’s women facility, as one example. She teaches parenting classes and anger management skills to inmates.

School enrichment activities include the “Organ Wise Guys,” which helps children understand basic anatomy, the value of regular exercise and the importance of good nutrition. Another program is “Just Be It,” a basic fitness course. All Grants/Cibola County School District elementary school curriculums include both programs, according to Brown.

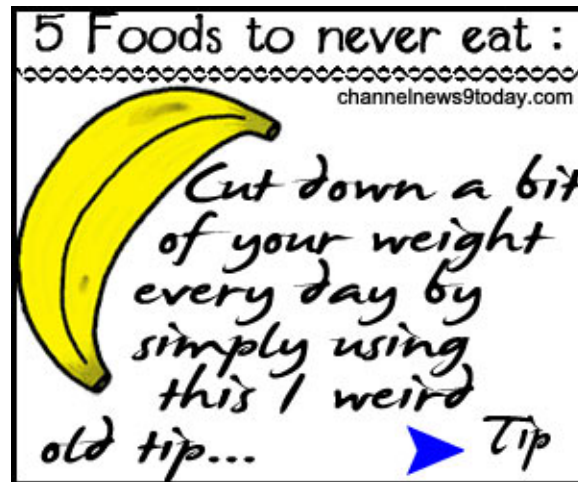
Community members have access to a variety of agricultural informational resources and services through the statewide cooperative extension services, which include numerous free programs for people of all ages, explained Elkins.

The director confirmed that residents have been available from county extension services for more than 50

program director. BEACON / COURTESY



(Use arrows above to view more photos)



years.

(Editor’s note: More than 100 government and private agencies have partnered with the state’s cooperative extension services to provide a variety of programs ranging from diabetes education to water conservation, according to the state cooperative extension service’s website.)

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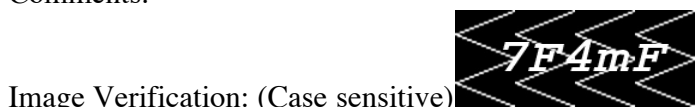
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