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Kick-off event celebrates start of new 4-H season

By VINCENT OSUNA, Staff Writer
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Brooke Brinnon, 12, of Southwest Valley 4-H, stands beside her rabbit project during the 4-H kickoff event on Saturday in El Centro. PHOTO VINCENT OSUNA

EL CENTRO — Registration is open for the 2021-22 Imperial County 4-H season.



Nikki (left) and Cami Kenagy, 13, sit while at the M&M 4-H dog showmanship table during the 4-H kickoff event on Saturday in El Centro. PHOTO VINCENT OSUNA

As a way to promote the Nov. 4 registration deadline, Imperial County 4-H members on Saturday held a 4-H kickoff event inside the Imperial Valley Mall.

Held from 10 a.m. to noon near the mall's food court, the event gave the public a platform to learn about what the 15 4-H clubs in the county offer.

The event ultimately aimed to attract new members (ages 5 to 19), and remind returning members to re-enroll.



Brinleigh Adams, 7, prepares to spin in a spin-the-wheel game during the 4-H kickoff event on Saturday in El Centro.
PHOTO VINCENT OSUNA

While enrollment is open throughout the 4-H program year, which begins July 1 and ends June 30, members must be enrolled by Nov. 4 to participate in the California Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta — the main event for most animal projects.

The event featured several tables festooned with balloons and green tablecloths to catch the attention of mall patrons passing by the food court.

The Brawley-based Magnolia 4-H club, at its table, shared its community service projects, such as a coat and blanket drive, a canned food drive and Plaza planting (planting plants at Plaza Park in Brawley).

At her table, Brooke Brinnon, 12, of Southwest Valley 4-H, showcased her rabbit project, and allowed visitors to pet the rabbit.

Mother and daughter Nikki and Cami Kenagy were joined at their table by dogs Izzy and Sophie.

The two pups, both on leashes, were quite friendly and had no shyness in approaching those who stopped by the table.

Nikki and Cami, 13, presented the dogs to show what the dog showmanship project offered by the Brawley-based M&M 4-H is all about.

The project teaches members how to handle their canines during show time, as well as how to properly look after the health of the animal.

Nikki Kenagy said showing a dog at the Mid-Winter Fair is a very accessible project for many 4-H members.



Guests converse among themselves during the 4-H kickoff event on Saturday in El Centro. PHOTO VINCENT OSUNA

“Even if you don’t have a lot of money,” she said. “It’s not like raising a steer or pig.”

She said the dog used can be of any breed, and potential exhibitors can even borrow a dog to use for the project.

“They could use their own personal dog or anybody’s dog,” Kenagy said. “It just has to be friendly and non-aggressive.”

Last year’s 4-H kick-off was completely virtual.

Southwest Valley 4-H member Addison Holbrook did some presenting during last year’s event. She was present Saturday, and helped anyone who stopped by.

Holbrook was recently selected as a 2021-22 California 4-H State ambassador.

Cooper Griffith, 16, of Mt. Signal 4-H, said Saturday’s event wasn’t exactly identical to kick-offs held in years past, which have also been at the mall.

"The restrictions," he explained. "There's less people to be at the mall because of COVID."

Griffith, along with Gianna Cox, 16, of Dogwood 4-H; 4-H program representative Anita Martinez, and others arrived early Saturday to set up tables.

Cox said she felt that Saturday's kick-off, which was the county's 10th, helped spread the word that Imperial County 4-H offers numerous opportunities.

One table was filled with Lego projects and toy rocket projects.

"People think it's nothing but animals," she said. "It's just to get people to know about 4-H. It's not just the fair. There's more to it than the fair."

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