



PUEBLO COUNTY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Pueblo County PATHWAYS

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The Power of AgFest

By Jennifer Loewen

Did you know agricultural food production is currently the second largest revenue source in the state of Colorado? Did you know that rain that falls in Colorado flows into rivers in 17 other states? Did you know there are 4 chickens per person in the world? (That's over 33 billion!) Colorado agriculture is a proud and longstanding tradition in our state. In an effort to share the importance of agriculture with the future citizens of Colorado, CSU Extension Specialists from the Southern part of the state provided 500+ 5th grade students with the opportunity to really "dig in" and learn about Colorado agriculture and natural resources.



AgFest is a yearly, novel learning opportunity provided to District 60 and 70 students and students from Fremont County. Fifth-graders from city schools had the opportunity to weave fiber, watch how water impacts the land, and handle 5-day-old chicks at the embryology station. While traveling around to different "stations" at the Colorado State Fairgrounds, students had the opportunity to connect with agriculture in a new and personal way. From the fibers that make up our clothes to the solar energy that powers our homes, from the beef products that make up more than the steak on our plates and the grain that makes up the bread we eat for lunch, students were presented with unique opportunities to understand how Colorado agriculture provides for all our citizens to lead healthy lives.

The meaningful impact of AgFest can be seen in a very tangible way within the post-tests collected at the end of the event. Before having the opportunity to participate, the average score of a 5th grade student regarding agriculture knowledge was 30%. After visiting the stations and being provided hands-on experiential learning, that knowledge leapt up to 73%. Altogether, at the conclusion of the event, students were able to produce an average increase of 43%. Besides the obvious qualitative results observed, 5th graders were noticeably excited to learn about agriculture concepts, asking insightful questions and challenging their preconceptions about farming and rural agriculture practices.

Agriculture may loom large in Colorado—but through valuable programs like AgFest, perhaps it isn't as intimidating as one could be lead to believe. Through hand-on and experiential learning opportunities, students will lead the charge with new and innovative practices, making Agriculture "Good to Grow" for the foreseeable future.

4-H On The Rise

By Jennifer Loewen and Alexandra Deary

One of the most beautiful and heartbreaking parts of running a youth development program is watching your children grow up. We touch their lives for a moment, and in the blink of an eye they are adults leaving the nest. We hope they will carry with them the lessons and values of the program, and we wait anxiously to hear news of the amazing things they do in their adult lives.

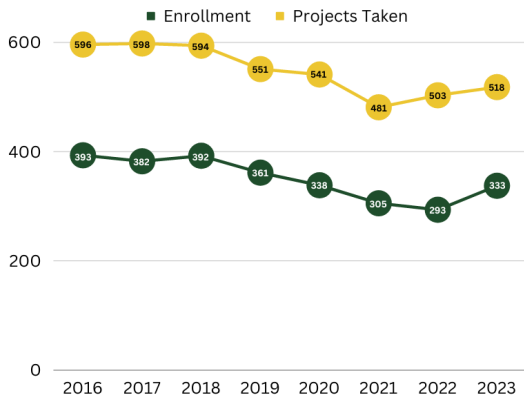
But this creates a unique problem for programs like 4-H; if your members are constantly growing up and aging out of the program, how do you maintain participation? How can we increase our numbers when we lose members every year? Add in external factors (like a worldwide pandemic), and suddenly the problem has increased several-fold.

Ten years ago, the 4-H Program had 406 registered active members. But then that number started to fall. The next year had 398; the following year had 393. Slowly, our rosters dwindled. Every year, fewer children enrolled. Then, when the pandemic hit in 2020, our program took a huge hit. In 2022, we were down to 293 registered members, over 100 fewer than a decade ago.

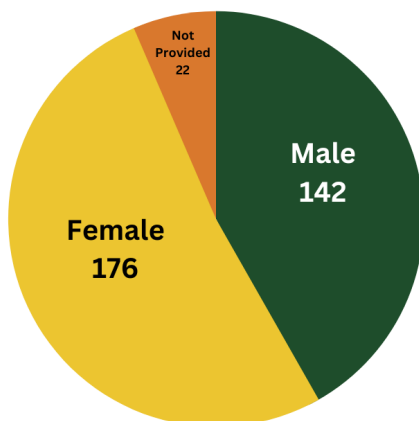
To preserve the legacy of Pueblo County 4-H, the team launched a slew of recruiting activities. The Leadership Society planned a Halloween Carnival and Dance; the Parent Leader Group continued their Bells of Christmas Craft Sale. Volunteers recruited their neighbors' kids and their children's classmates. The office handed out flyers at community events, and our 4-H Specialist and Coordinator worked together to bolster existing projects while simultaneously researching ways to add new experiences, like the wildly successful Cloverbud Camp. Finally, their hard work paid off; as of March of 2023, the Pueblo County 4-H program had 333 active members. They broke the ten-year slump, and then some. They have a robust wait list of children who want to enroll next year, and more asking for information about the program every day.

Saying goodbye to our children when they grow up will never get easier. But we know that, with hard work (and some word-of-mouth marketing), our program and its legacy will be secure.

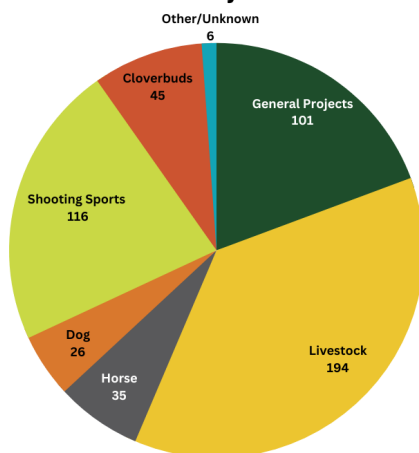
**Pueblo County 4-H Enrollment
2015-2023**



**Participant Gender 2022-2023
333 Total Participants**



**Project Types 2022-2023
518 Total Projects Taken**



Sun Soil Water Ag Summit

By Beth De Lair

The 3rd annual Sun, Soil, Water Ag Summit was paired with a new agriculture track from the Pueblo County CSU Extension office and the Pueblo Food Project. This year's summit experience had a track for everyone involved in food systems from producers to consumers, and everyone in between. The event kicked off Friday, March 16th with an entrepreneurial pitch competition that allowed people from all around Colorado to submit ideas that could become potential successes for the Pueblo community in various food industry sectors such as farms, restaurants, warehouses, and many other areas. This competition was coupled with an awards banquet for the participants plus outstanding members nominated in various categories from the Pueblo Food Project. Notable audience members of this Friday event included a video message from Senator Bennet who had a large hand in creating the Pueblo Food Project and Mayor Nick Gradisar.

The full conference event then kicked off on Saturday, March 17th. The three tracks for the program were focused on agriculture, community food systems, and food for you. Each track had a total of three sessions along with various keynote speaker sessions that focused on topics such as Southern Colorado water, food sovereignty, and the new food hub creation taking place in Pueblo that is being done by Fuel and Iron. Session rooms were well attended with a diverse audience that asked questions regarding how we can help our community grow with increasing food deserts and rising grocery store prices. After some great educational sessions and amazing food from Soul Smile Health and Wellness, the happy hour and maker market was fully available to all participants. This created a wonderful atmosphere of networking opportunities and the chance for conference participants to walk through the various market tables that had items for purchase or community resources. The Pueblo County CSU Extension ag team had a wonderful experience getting to pair up with the Pueblo Food Project for this event and we look forward to future ways we can help connect the dots for Pueblo agriculture. Be sure to keep an eye out for the 2024 event!





PUEBLO COUNTY

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Upcoming Events

For details, call 583-6566 or visit
<http://pueblo.extension.colostate.edu>

Family and Consumer Programs

- **Foods Safety Training for Cottage Foods Producers, 3-year certification, fee \$50.00.** Various online webinar dates are available. Register at Eventbrite.com
- **Cookie Decorating Classes, May 24 and June 14, 2:00-4:00 p.m., \$15,** register at <https://cookies23.eventbrite.com>
- **2023 Food Preservation Series,** visit <https://pueblo.extension.colostate.edu/> for class dates and registration information
- **Free pressure gauge testing.** Call 719-583-6566 for appointment.
- **Follow the FCS program on Facebook at:** <https://www.facebook.com/PuebloFCS/>

Horticulture Programs

- **All Pueblo Grows Seed Library, collecting and packaging seeds.** Look for neighborhood seed boxes. Visit: allpueblogrows.org
- **Follow the Horticulture program on Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/PuebloCountyHorticulture>

4-H/Youth Development

- **Ongoing Club and County Programs**
- **Follow us on Facebook and YouTube**

Agronomy/Ag/Range/Natural Resources

- **C.A.R.T Volunteer Orientation, May 5, 6-7 p.m. at CSU Extension, 701 Court St. Suite C**
- <https://www.facebook.com/PuebloAg>

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Find us at: @PuebloCountyExtension

4-H Dog Field Day

By Dorothy Welbourne

In an effort to offer more educational opportunities to the 4-H Dog project members, 4-H Dog Field Day was created by Pueblo County 4-H Coordinator, Dorothy Welbourne. 4-H Dog Field Day had seven members, along with their parent or grandparent, attend the one-day field trip to the Dumb Friends League, Linda A. Malone Center, in Denver. This Center is a full-service shelter offering adoptions, pet admissions, lost-and-found services, and other services for small animal species, plus an equine facility separate from their main building. The educator at the facility gave a lesson on the organization's purpose, mission, and the logistics of the organization. She also talked to the youth about available careers working with dogs, especially animal welfare careers such as Intake Specialists, Adoption Specialists, Behavior Therapists, Educators, Veterinarians, and much more. They provided a tour, which showed youth the amount of equipment, supplies, and labor it takes to provide needed services to animals. It was eye-opening to see all the components it takes to provide education, shelter, food, medical services, and to maintain a clean and safe environment. Along with the basic food and shelter everyone thinks of, they also organize and assess volunteers, staff the shelter, schedule offered therapies to abused or neglected animals, and make sure they are healthy enough to be adopted. The Dumb Friends league animal medical service also extends beyond the shelter, their "Veterinary Hospitals exists to prevent and alleviate suffering in pets whose caretakers would otherwise be unable to provide this care." This is a full-service animal welfare facility. At the end of the lesson and tour, 4-Hers saw all the dogs ready for adoption with new eyes, because of the information the educator provided on all the staff, paper work, partnerships, training, basic, and medical care it takes to get a dog from intake to adoption.



Dog project members attend 4-H Dog Field Day.



Behind-the-scenes tour

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