

# RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS



Photos by Tim Keller

Danita Ager points out aspects of livestock evaluation to Santa Rosa agriculture students at Clayton Saturday.

## Clayton FFA Invitational draws teens from across northeastern N. M.

By **TIM KELLER**  
*The Chronicle-News*

The Union County Fairgrounds bustled with life Saturday as the Clayton High School FFA hosted its first Clayton FFA Invitational Contest in many years. High school FFA students from Raton, Des Moines, Clayton, Maxwell, Santa Rosa, San Jon, Logan, Tucumcari, and Las Vegas competed in more than a dozen categories, joined by younger Union County 4-H club members who attended for the many educational opportunities.

Saturday's contests served as a warm-up for this week's district competition at ENMU in Portales, which will be followed by the state competition at NMSU in Las Cruces next week. A close look at Saturday's contests demonstrated the diversity and academic demands of agricultural studies. Many of the competitions consisted of paper-and-pencil tests containing 200 questions or more. In a full day, each student has time to enter only two, or sometimes three, contests.

The Wildlife competition, for example, consists of three portions. First, students view 30 animal parts – a wing, a pelt, a jawbone, a skull, an antler, a feather – and identify what animal each part came from. Each part is accompanied by a question: What is the gestation period of this animal? Adult weight? Main food? Next, students take a challenging multiple-choice test: What color is the mallard's speculum in eclipse plumage? When does a kestrel become sexually mature? How many toes does a hawk have? How many rings are on a raccoon's tail? The 75 questions are selected by organizers from a book of 950 such questions that the students have studied all year. Finally, the young competitors sit in a darkened room to watch 75 slides of a wide variety of animals in the field, identifying each from a provided list of 167 animals.

The Farm Business Management test is harder still, evaluating opportunity costs, inelastic demand curves, mortgage analysis, and other sophisticated economics content. Clayton High School math teacher Sheila Harris, who proctored this test, holds a masters degree in economics. "Yeah, this is high level stuff," she said, randomly picking out a question: "Identify strategies to improve term debt and capital lease coverage ratio."

"Heck yes, it's academics!" Max Geary emphasized. "It's all academics." Geary, who spent Saturday teaching the finer points of poultry while provoking frequent laughter from students, taught agriculture and sponsored FFA for 35 years at Clayton High School: even before he retired in 2002, the school had put his name on its Agriculture building. "A lot of students avoided my classes because they thought I was too academic," he said. Watching him teach students from all over northeastern New Mexico Saturday, it was easy to see why he's been popular, combining his rigorous expectations with an easy smile and quick laugh.

Adjacent to Geary's poultry division were two long tables containing scattered T-squares, triangles, compasses, and templates. Students sat intently focused on their work in the Landscape Design competition. Each received the same detailed job commission, to landscape a rural home six miles east of Clayton, taking into account



Lane Harris of Clayton, left, and Sarah Goetsch of Las Vegas focus intently on their landscape designs in Saturday's FFA competition.



On the Raton FFA bus, Daniel Sanchez laughs at the idea of learning horse judging from a book, though that's just what he's doing.

wind and dust, shade needs, and the family's enjoyment of entertaining and gardening. The house was three miles downwind from a feedlot; winter snows blew in from the same direction. Each student carefully drew a landscape design to address the needs of the property, adding detailed lists of plants and other materials.

Outside, by the arena and pens, student teams gathered to judge horses and livestock. Danita Ager walked the Santa Rosa livestock team through the pens, patiently putting her students through their paces. She commented on the finer points of evaluation – muscles, frame, length, build, balance – a little like the Miss America pageant but more useful. When one boy started to adjust his score on sheep number 4, Ager coached him, "No, don't change your mind. Your first impression is always right."

Wherever there were kids, there was an adult, and every adult was teaching, passing on generations of knowledge and skills. Geary told one group, "You can get scholar-

ship money with your brain." Though it looked nothing like a traditional classroom, there was as much learning as in any school. All day. On a Saturday.

On the Raton FFA bus, sophomore Daniel Sanchez looked up from studying to explain why he joined the school's successful horse-judging team – 12th in state last year – even though he's never ridden a horse; in fact, he touched a horse for the first time just three weeks ago. "It's something to do," Sanchez said. "It gets me out of the house." He likes animals so he signed up for an animal science class at Raton High School. That led him to FFA. Asked how he learned to judge horses, he held up the 28-page manual from his lap. Had this made him want to ride a horse? "Yeah, someday," he responded with a smile bigger than even Max Geary's. "Sooner or later."

It was like that all around the Union County Fairgrounds Saturday: lots of learning, lots of competition, lots of smiles.

## Local author in top five percent for Amazon.com writing contest

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He finds out after returning home that he holds the winning ticket, and must return to NY in order to claim the winnings, thousands of dollars. This character study reveals how one can change in pursuit of money.

"Powerless," Edwards' second novel written in 1997, provides the reader with a story of terrorism that causes a huge power outage that affects the entire country and the man who is mistakenly accused of the crime.

Edwards' third manuscript, "Thinking Outside the Box," a story about being buried alive, is written in the first person, and provides the reader with an insight into the character of this man who becomes an unexpected hero. As cynical voices

in his head become real in his weakened mind, he uses his shoe to shovel his way out. His mind races as he works to gain his freedom. He remembers his joy at his upcoming wedding and the events in his life that leads to the fate he is suffering at the moment. A twist in the story adds even more interest to this thriller.

For a glimpse at this novel, and to provide a review, visit [www.amazon.com/dp/B001UG3BOU](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B001UG3BOU). Edwards believes that the more reviews made, the better her chances are for placing in the top one hundred. She will be notified on April 15 if she has made the next cut. After that, the top three selected will be flown to Seattle, Washington for the announcement of the final winner.

## COLEFAX COUNTY CALENDAR

**MARCH**  
**March 23**

Maternal Child Health Meeting - Noon at the Sands Restaurant.

**Tuesday, March 24**

7:30 pm Grand Derangement. High energy Canadian music and dance ensemble. Presented by Raton Arts and Humanities Council and State Oil Co. Tickets at [www.ratonarts.org](http://www.ratonarts.org) or (575) 445-2052.

**March 26**

Health Council Meeting - Noon at International Room of International Bank.

**March 27**

Substance Abuse Prevention Meeting - 10:00 a.m. at YES office.

**March 28**

Schwann's truckload sale to benefit the Christian Motorcycle Association's "Run for the Son" (888)413-0003.



Photo by Laura L. Brewer

Liberty Day Kids read proclamations from the City of Raton and from the Governor's Office during awards ceremony at Kearny Elementary School.

## Students at Kearny Elementary School receive awards

By **LAURA L. BREWER**  
*The Chronicle-News*

Kearny Elementary School recognized its honor roll students with certificates and high praise during an awards ceremony last Friday morning. Students were called to the front of the assembly to receive congratulations, a hand-shake, a smile and their award from individual teachers. Awards were given to students who had maintained an all "A" average, and to those students with all A's and B's.

At the end of the ceremony, the Liberty Day Kids, who had traveled to Santa Fe on March 16 to visit the state capitol, were awarded certificates for working as honorary pages in the state legislature. After receiving the certificates each student read a part of two proclamations, one from the City of Raton and the other from the governor's office for the State of New Mexico, declaring March 16 as "Liberty Day" in New Mexico. Liberty Day, March 16, John Madison's birthday, is a nationally recognized day to learn more about the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

The Raton Lion's Club sponsors the trip to Santa Fe every year for the fifth grade Liberty Kids and provides other opportunities for the students to learn more about the constitution, our founding fathers, and the Declaration of Independence, including the Bill of Rights. During this year's trip the students and sponsors met Secretary of State Mary Herrera, Senator Clinton Hardin, and Representative Thomas Garcia.

Fourth grade Honor roll students receiving all A's during the past nine week period at Kearny

who were presented with certificates on Friday were: Cy Brower, Ponzi Casias, Alejandro Esparza, Jacob Hattaway, Austin Jones, Dillon Lemons, Makayla Ley, Ande Lopez, Jason Parker, Alina Pillmore, Jayla Rohde, Dante Sparaco, Daria Teterycz, McKenna Valdez, and Tate Wood.

"A/B" honor roll fourth grade students receiving awards were: Mariah Alderette, Paul Barela, Jonathan Cabriaes, Kailie Village Center, Ayden Duncan, Ayanna Encinias, Kevin Fanelli, Camille Gonzales, Sara Johnson, Mary Kaplan, Hannah Kuchan, Ivy Lark, Shyloh Lucero, Soylo Lucero, Sofia Maddaleni, Jasmine Armijo Martinez, Michael Martinez, Shyanne Martinez, Kristin Ortega, Bailey Ramirez, Mabry Requa, Edward Rodriguez, Lauren Romero, Dimetrious Sandoval, Heather Sandoval, Jillian Silva, Victor Sisneros, Dustin Stevens, Breanna Trujillo, Montana Trujillo, and Savannah Trujillo.

In fifth grade the "A" honor roll students were: Melanie Alderette, Alyssa Aragon, Dawn Rae Arguello, Tyler Daniel, Forrest McConnell, Makayla Schaufaer, Hunter Schoonover, and T.J. Shell.

Fifth grade "A/B" honor roll students were: Nayelli Acosta, Alee Bird, Darion Bird, Allison Caldarelli, Charity Encinias, Raeanne Fissel, Alysia Gomez, Desmond Gutierrez, Jason Harrison, Frank Hurtado, Jami Lopez, Joanna Martinez, Ty McCarty, Madison Poteste, Moss Saccomanno, and Alicia Thompson,