

By Stephen Heppe:

Four Portage County 4-H youth competed in the Western National Roundup at the National Western Stock Show held in Denver, Colorado. The members of the Portage County 4-H Livestock Judging Team included Doug Kisamore and Katy Shircliff of Randolph and Bob Hermann and Kirsten Wise of Atwater. Coaches for the team are two Portage County Volunteers, Dan Tronge of Brimfield and Stephen Heppe of Randolph. This team represented the state of Ohio at this national contest placing 8th overall, 5th in the sheep division, and 7th in the hog division. As an individual, Bob Hermann placed 3rd with his Hog scores.

At the Competition, the group met many other 4-H youth from across the United State and Canada and became friends with the delegation from Alberta, Canada. The youth judged ten classes of both market and breeding livestock, consisting of beef, sheep, swine, and goats giving oral reason on six classes. This experience provided team members with a trip of a lifetime plus a great amount of knowledge, especially related to leadership and teamwork skills.

Some of the team members have been through two other National Competitions. Katy and Bob were part of the team that went to the American Royal in Kansas City in 2004. Katy, Bob, and Kirsten went with our team last year to the Eastern Regional Competition in North Carolina. This year's team placed higher than any other Portage County Team at a National Competition.

While in Denver, the 4-H'ers had quite a tight schedule with the first day all about getting into the hotel, registering, and settling in. The second day the team and coaches went to the University of Colorado in Fort Collins to practice and traveled there with the team from Alberta, Canada. This gave our team a chance to get to know the Alberta team. We shared with them how we practice and gave them many new ideas, while at the same time learning from them about their 4-H Program in Canada. The third day the team had to leave for the competition at 6:30am and then judged ten classes of animals. At noon, they returned to the Hotel to give their Oral Reasons on six of the animal classes. When this concluded, the members had an Extreme Colorado Dance and Virtual Reality Experience where they finally were able to unwind and relax. At the Evening Activities, teams could compete against each other and our Ohio team won the rock wall climb (they could reach the top in half the time of the Canadian team). The next morning the competition ended with a Closing Ceremonies that included the announcement of the winners and team standings.