

4-H'ers learn valuable lessons through beef projects

BY CHARLOTTE MURPHY
CHICAGO, Ill. — They are bright and articulate, these 40 young men and women representing their states at National 4-H Congress in Chicago. They are winners in the 4-H beef program and they are rightly proud. But they have concerns, too.

They have learned that the general public doesn't know where its hamburgers come from—and doesn't care. They have learned that it's tough to turn a profit.

"Production know-how isn't enough, you need business skills to make it in livestock today," said Christine Simmons of Michigan. "The most valuable lessons I learned dealt with economics."

If supporting a 4-H program is an investment in America's future leaders, Friends of Thomas E. Wilson, sponsor of the beef program, can expect a good return. A beef project isn't a simulation of the real world—it is the real world. And though they see problems and pitfalls, many of

these 4-H'ers are emerging from their beef projects committed to a career that involved the livestock industry.

At the beginning of Congress they met to talk about their years in 4-H, their successes and failures, what helped, what didn't. Leading the group was Ron Horton, a 4-H animal science specialist from Ohio by way of Florida. Two themes quickly emerged from the discussions: their beef projects taught them that financial and marketing skills are essential to success, and that promotion is part of marketing.

"Showing and judging competitions have helped me be a better manager of my herd by making me more aware of trends in the livestock industry," said Tommy Shipp of Alabama. "I learned to judge meats and to know what the consumer is looking for in beef," added Debbie Lyons of Kansas.

"It's not enough for the producer

to know how to produce cattle. He has to improve, promote, and sell a desirable product by the most efficient means possible," said David Holder of Kentucky. According to Maddi Watje of Calif., "Applying for a bank loan showed me the reality behind the glitter of showing. If you don't understand the economics of raising beef, you don't get full benefit from your project."

Most of these 4-H'ers are interested in livestock related areas. related is the key word, because their 4-H projects have taught them that the future of the livestock industry is dependent on effective marketing and promotion.

Mary White of Maryland, is studying economics and is headed for agribusiness. So are Mike Kloos of Minnesota and Anne Laughlin of Missouri. David Hanson of Nebraska, Watje and Lyons plan to combine agriculture and communications. All three

have been involved in reaching general public through talks and demonstrations on the nutritional aspects of beef and its role in the diet.

Hanson started out borrowing \$450 to buy a breeding heifer, repaying the loan after the county fair. That investment has grown to six cows and a heifer valued at more than \$6,000. Raising the kind of livestock that does well in the sale ring is one of Hanson's major goals. Promoting beef is another. He gives demonstrations and addresses civic clubs on the nutritional aspects of beef and its role in the diet.

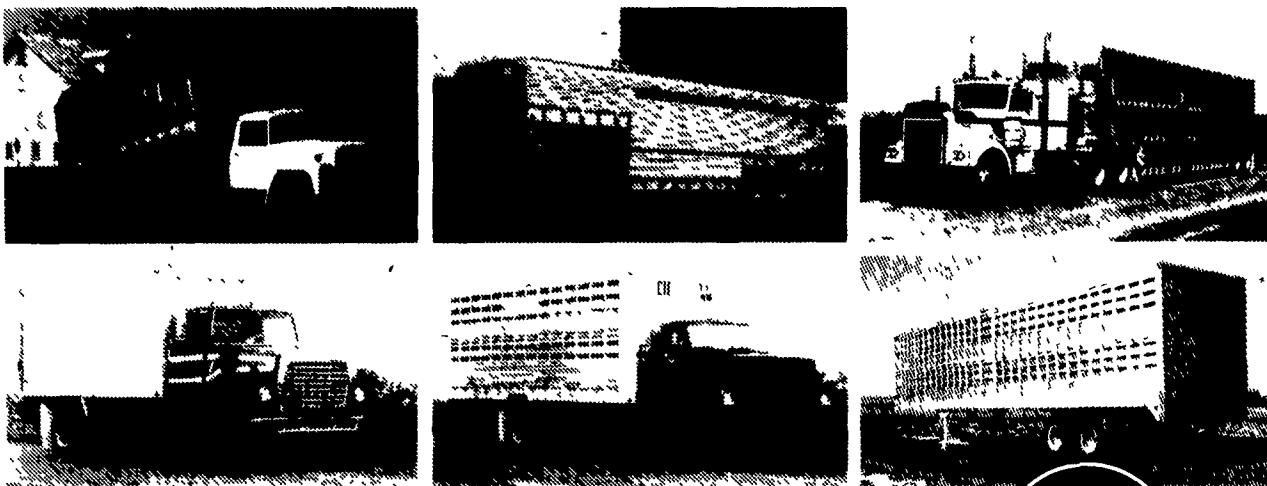
Lyons, a freshman majoring in agricultural journalism at Kansas State University, wants to work for a beef magazine, or in beef promotion. Her long-term goal, however, is to be an angus cattle rancher, and she wants to help create the climate she needs to succeed.

As reigning Western Angus

Queen, Watje is involved in beef promotion in 11 states. Her travels have convinced her that beef production management and public relations must go hand in hand. "I'm ready to tackle the future whatever it may be. In 4-H, I learned to hang in there when the going gets tough," she said.

Through their 4-H beef projects, these young men and women are heading for careers with their eyes wide open. They know about the challenges that lie ahead, and are ready to face them. The livestock industry will indeed be in good hands.

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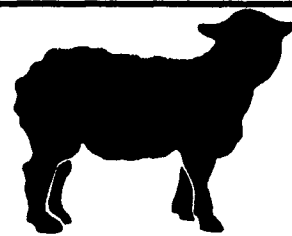
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