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4-H kicks off start of new season

By VINCENT OSUNA, Staff Writer Aug 25, 2019



Verde 4-H member Joseph Barra, 6, (left) and Kylie Molina, 3, work on 4-H-themed coloring pages during the annual 4-H Kick Off event held Saturday at the Imperial Valley Mall in El Centro. PHOTO VINCENT OSUNA

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EL CENTRO — As another Imperial County 4-H season is set to begin, current members gathered Saturday to ensure the new year gets off to a good start.

The eighth annual 4-H Kick Off event took place in front of Macy's inside the Imperial Valley Mall, drawing in passersby to learn about what the countywide program has to offer and possibly bring in new members.

"This is an event to get not only the current 4-H members and past 4-H members but future 4-H members excited about the 4-H year," University of California Cooperative Extension student intern Addyson Rubin said. "It's to kind of boost enrollment and get the community aware of what 4-H is. It's not just the fair; it's other things."

While Verde 4-H member Emma Britschgi showcased her small animal project, other attractions at the event demonstrated the range 4-H activities. There was a bicycle-powered blender for making strawberry and banana smoothies, information about a Quiz Bowl and other projects on display.

"There's more to 4-H than just the animals that we show at the fair," All-Star County Ambassador Hannah Cartee said. "There's also leadership activities that we're promoting and the still-life exhibits that we also have."

Rows of green-covered tables filled with exhibits and displays were a sight that couldn't be missed while walking the mall Saturday.

"I see all the 4-H members getting together to promote what they love about 4-H," Cartee, 17, said. "And they're not just promoting it to other 4-H members, they're promoting it to the public and to the community."

Cartee, who is entering her fourth year as an All-Star and has been in the local 4-H program since she was 5, believed that at least one member from each of the 15 4-H clubs in the Valley was present during the Kick-Off.

"It's showing how we're all together," Cartee said. "We're a community — we're not each individual clubs or individual families showing animals."

In 2011, only 693 kids made up the Valley's 4-H program. By 2017, local membership was at 7,282.

Playing a notable role in the membership growth have been promotional events such as the Kick-Off.

"We're here with our enrollment, ready to get people involved," Rubin said. "It kind of just shows one of the ways which we're not only focused on our current members, we're looking to increase it. We want everyone to get involved because we're so passionate about this program."

Staff Writer Vincent Osuna can be reached at vosuna@ivpressonline.com or 760-337-3442.

Vincent Osuna