

2026 *Lincoln County* **FAIR**

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Tobacco Valley
NEWS

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The community shows up in force every summer to bid at the 4-H livestock auction. Patrick Broom photo.



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Embracing the spirit of 4-H: meet members Lilly and Annie Boerner

By Jessica Wood
Of the Tobacco Valley News



From the livestock barn to craft exhibits and home economics displays, the Lincoln County Fair showcases the many talents of local 4-H members.

For twin siblings Lilly and Annie Boerner of the Montana Mustangs, this year's fair is a chance to demonstrate just how diverse those skills can be. While they are raising pigs in preparation for the show ring, they're also carefully stitching quilts and creating woodworking projects, embracing the wide range of opportunities that 4-H offers.

Both Lilly and Annie have been involved with 4-H for the past two years. They had raised chickens, but wanted to try raising larger animals. "Pigs sounded fun," said Lilly. The girls have now raised pigs for the past two years.

This year, the girls had the chance to raise an orphan pig named Peaches from one week old this spring. It has been fun, but hard work. Annie has also been raising a pig called Farm Pig this year, who loves to run. Annie wanted to raise pigs for the experience and the knowledge that comes along with it. She has enjoyed learning about their personalities each year.

Lilly's pig, Pickles, is the guardian of the pack. "He likes popsicles and belly scratches," she said. Farm Pig does not like popsicles, but does love belly rubs.

Raising pigs can be an arduous task, not to mention smelly, but it's one that the girls have thoroughly embraced. Working as pooper-scoopers at the Rendezvous



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**Lilly Boerner****Annie Boerner**

parade for the past few years, the twins are not shy to get their hands dirty and muck in. Training their pigs, feeding them twice a day, cleaning their bowls, making sure they have fresh water and cleaning the pen are just some of the jobs involved in raising pigs. Making sure the pigs make weight, and making sure they don't eat too much or not enough can be a challenge. And despite working together on raising their pigs, there is still room for a little bit of sisterly competition. "We compare who's pig is better behaved," they said.

The four H's in the organization's name stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

The Hands part of the group promotes wider service and useful skills, something which the girls have fully adopted. They enjoy the club activities they do together and the community service opportunities they often take part in. With regards to useful skills, the girls have also been using their hands for woodwork and quilting projects. "This year I'm doing woodworking, which has been fun because my dad has a sawmill," said Lilly, who has made an eight foot shelf and a coat rack to bring to the fair.

"This year I'm making a quilt," said Annie. "I'm quilting a four seasons pattern. Its a lot of work but fun". In their two short years with the Montana Mustangs, they have not only learned life skills such as patience and putting in effort to gain the reward, but more specific skills too such as how to tend to livestock, including pigs, chickens, sheep

and dogs. Wanting to continue learning more and using their skills into the future, Lilly said, "I want to let my kids grow up with 4-H animals."

Annie agreed, "I want to keep raising pigs to put meat in our freezer. Bacon especially."

Their dedication across multiple projects reflects not only hours of hard work, but the creativity, responsibility and perseverance that 4-H is designed to inspire. Montana Mustangs club leader Jessie Ressel said that Lilly and Annie truly represent the spirit of 4-H. "These two young ladies are the kind of members every club hopes for," she said. "They are motivated, dependable, and always looking for ways to serve others."

Ressel said that the girls have a genuine passion for the pigs that they raise and take tremendous pride in their care. "Their dedication to their projects is matched only by their positive attitudes and willingness to tackle any job - especially the messy one," she said. With contagious enthusiasm and inspiring work ethic, Ressel said that the Montana Mustangs are better because of them. "We're incredibly proud to have them represent the values of 4-H, and we can't wait to see all they accomplish in the years ahead," she said.

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A photograph of a man and a woman standing outdoors in a natural setting, likely a river or stream. They are both wearing fishing vests, hats, and sunglasses, and are smiling at the camera. The woman is on the left, holding a fishing rod, and the man is on the right, also holding a fishing rod. They are surrounded by greenery and water.

Tying it all together

Proceeds from new fair booth
will support group working to
strengthen family connections

By Jessica Wood
Of the Tobacco Valley News

For generations, the Lincoln County Fair has been a place where families gather to celebrate community, tradition and quality time spent together. This year, visitors to the fair will find a new addition that reflects that spirit in a different way. Family Lines, a Tobacco Valley based non-profit dedicated to strengthening the bond between children and their fathers or father-figures through outdoor experiences and mentorship, will make its debut at the fair, inviting families to learn more about its mission and the lasting impact of meaningful connection. Eureka couple Julie and Jon Hagedorn founded Family Lines in 2010 after Jon spent years working in outdoor recreation, where countless conversations around campfires revealed a common

theme: many children feel disconnected from their fathers or father figures and longed to spend more time with them. Through Family Lines, kids and their fathers can sign up to go on a variety of fishing trips together including river excursions, day trips, rod-making sessions, fly-tying lessons and even a week-long expedition to Alaska's Katmai National Park. "Fishing is great for connection," said Julie. "People are calm enough to talk, have a fun shoulder-to-shoulder experience, and bridge the gap between generations."

Many locals will be familiar with Julie's business, the Castaways Coffee truck, which also serves as an important part of the non-profit. "I've always had a dream to connect people through coffee and conversation," said Julie, who added that at least 10 percent of profits go to the Family Lines Scholarship Fund or other organizations that increase connections between families.

Believing that a big reason for many societal problems is dysfunctional family ties, Julie said that they wanted a way to prevent the dysfunction before it begins. "Why not throw money at getting the family right," she said. "Studies have shown that if kids have an engaged father in the home, they are less likely to drop out, be addicted

to substances and be more likely to hold stable and steady relationships."

For Julie, one of the most powerful examples of Family Lines' impact came during last year's Alaska trip, when a 19-year old joined the adventure with his father, a doctor. The son arrived carrying years of frustration, feeling his father had been absent from his life because of work.

After taking part in guided conversations during the trip, the father apologized to his son for not being more present - to which the son responded that it was too late. By the end of the trip, the son opened up on camera during an exercise, sharing that he truly did want to rebuild his bond with his father but didn't know how to move forward. He wrote his father a letter expressing how he felt, creating a turning point in their relationship. Today, the two speak multiple times a day and continue to go on adventures together. "It was a complete 180 over the course of just five days," said Julie. "The moral is that it's never too late to mend a relationship."

Having helped many families through Family Lines trips and activities, Julie said that they have also produced several online learning resources that are available, for free, to all families that are interested in rebuilding

relationships. "Last year alone, 35,000 people watched the video series," said Julie. "It's been really encouraging to see how many people benefit from other peoples stories."

Manning a booth at the fair, said Julie, will be an important way for the non-profit to reach local families who may need support. She encouraged folks to stop by for some BBQ pulled pork flatbread. "One hundred percent of the proceeds will go back into the non-profit," said Julie. "People will know if they spend money there they will be benefiting another family."

Looking ahead, Julie and Jon hope to be able to help more fathers and their children in the community by getting them together. "We want dads to know that they're not the only ones, and that there is help," said Julie. "We just want to help mend those relationships and make them stronger."

To learn more about Family Lines, you can visit their website at www.familylines.org. or visit Julie and Jon at their booth or at Castaways Coffee truck at the fair.




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Bull rider Jacob Hershberger is launched from his mount at the 2025 Bull Thing. Patrick Broom photo.



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Ava Rohletter of Eureka embraces a chicken in the rabbit and poultry barn at the 2025 fair. Nikki Meyer photo.



Teens race to assist a youngster during the mutton busting at the 2025 Friday night family games. Nikki Meyer photo.



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4-H kids lean on the rail of the auction ring. Patrick Broom photo.



Tots compete in the boot race at the Friday night family games, in which all contestants' shoes are placed in a pile at the opposite end of the arena and children race barefoot to find their footwear. Nikki Meyer photo.



Fifth grader Ayla Chilson takes the plunge in the Kidsville fun area during the 2025 fair. Traci Street photo.



Tally Sekera cajoles a goat at the 2025 petting zoo. Nikki Meyer photo.



The Kidsville barrel train is a popular attraction. Traci Street photo.

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Safety & Sanitation

*Fairgrounds electric & sewer
systems get upgraded*

By Traci Street

Of the Tobacco Valley News

Much needed improvements to the sewer and electrical systems at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds were completed by June of this year.

After an electrical line broke loose during the height of the Lincoln County Fair last year, it quickly became apparent that burying electrical lines and updating the system was a priority for the safety of any future event at the fairgrounds. The county worked with Lincoln Electric Co-op as well as other local electrical and excavation businesses to update the system, some of the work donated. The system went from one large electrical transformer powering the grounds, to several underground transformers. All electrical wire that previously posed a potential threat hanging above the grounds is now removed, most lines safely harbored underground. Overhead lighting wires, deemed to be safe, are still visible above ground.

A sewer project connecting the fairgrounds to the town of Eureka's sewer system was funded partially by an ARPA grant awarded prior to North Lincoln County Commissioner Noel Duram's tenure in office, and had been a lingering to-do item for the county. Fair secretary Pam Rackley said they

first received the grant after the COVID era, and it had taken a while to get the ball rolling. Construction on the sewer hookup began in mid-October of 2025 in order to stay within compliance with the grant requirements, according to Duram during an earlier commissioners meeting.

Both projects were sped up in preparation for not only the 2026 Lincoln County Fair, but also the five-day Red Clay Strays musical fan fest in June that drew over 100 campers to the fairgrounds. Prior to the fan fest, event organizer Larry Stewart donated sod and laid it in the food court, which had been dug up during the projects.

Reached for comment, Rackley said everything at the fairgrounds was complete and up and running. She said they were blessed to have the chance to test out the electric and the sewer during the Fan Fest event in June, so they know it's all working like it should. "We are ready for the fair!," she said.

Local companies such as Northwest Electrical Contractors, Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Rocky Mountain Contractors, All In Excavation & Hauling, and Noble Excavating were among the businesses that helped bring the fairgrounds up to speed, as well as donating a portion of their work and time during the projects.



Hard working 4-H members tend to their steers in the livestock barns. Nikki Meyer photo.



Laughing children compete in the three-legged race at the Friday night family games. Nikki Meyer photo.

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A young spectator takes advantage of a special second-story view at the 2025 Bull Thing. Will Ebert photo.



The Bull Thing attracts crowds each year ready to take in the thrills and spills. Patrick Broom photo.



Julie Rieben and Debbie Briggs enjoy some fair food under the shade of an umbrella. The food court offers lots of dining options and live music almost all weekend long. Traci Street photo.



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Rodeo family teen rallies 4-H pals for goat roping

By Traci Street
Of the Tobacco Valley News



A local Fortine teen organized a group of 4-H kids who get together and practice goat roping at his home each week. Cooper Eash, 14, has been part of 4-H since he was eight or nine years old. Eash is home schooled, and came up with the idea for a goat roping get-together after it was part of a project for seventh and eighth graders with his online school. Eash and his friends use goat roping as a way to practice roping the head and back legs of a calf. Eash competes in

rodeo already, as is evidenced by the shiny belt buckle adorning his belt. He was awarded the buckle for winning or placing in eight events at the recent youth rodeo at C Bar arena. Among

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other events, Eash competes in breakaway roping and barrel racing.

Eash comes from a family of rodeo competitors. The family's home in Fortine is practically a rodeo arena on its own. There's a large fenced area for practicing roping and barrel racing on horses, and a smaller fenced area with a tiny goat-sized chute just for goat roping. Practice bronc and bull riding machines are also on the grounds.

As the goats are brought in, a tiny-but-mighty dog attempts to help wrangle the goats by enthusiastically chasing them up and down the fence.

On this particular hot summer evening, roughly a dozen goats are funneled through a narrow fenced area that leads to a chute. As if they know what's coming, the goats all back up and push each other, straining the fence that's holding them until someone comes along and puts them in the chute.

About six ropers have shown up to practice. They stand, poised to release their lassos as the goat is freed from the chute. One roper aims for the neck while the other aims for the back legs.

The goats aren't always cooperative. Some of them stall rather than running from the chute the second it opens. Some of them run at top speed just a little ways and then stop, not giving the roper a chance to try and catch their legs. Others, once roped, go a little crazy, while the 4-H kids try to remove the rope from their necks or legs.

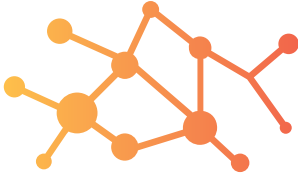
Slowly, as the goat roping continues, cars carrying older neighbors and grandparents arrive, visible through the dust arising from the small arena. Chairs are brought out and spectators take their places to cheer the kids on. The stakes rise as several of the parents sweeten the pot, offering points to teams of two who can rope the most necks and legs after a few rounds. Dollar bills are flashed and the kids get even more serious, attempting to not only increase their skills but earn a few bucks, as well.

At the end of the rounds, the goats are free to go, and Eash and his friends move on to their horses, ready to practice yet another rodeo skill. "Some of them are fast," Eash said of the goats with a shy smile. Ultimately, it's as much about having fun as it is about honing roping skills. Eash says goat roping is not much different than other roping events. "It's just fun," he said.



Cooper Eash, second from left, and Lara Cote, right, practice their roping skills at the Eash family home in Fortine as onlookers wait their turn. Traci Street photo.





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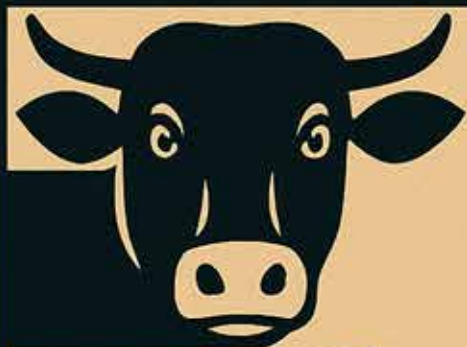
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Evening light slants through the Bull Thing crowd. Patrick Broom photo.



Emily Jones, left, and Styrk Storkson, visit in between taking care of their 4-H animals at the Lincoln County Fair. Traci Street photo.



Vendor Bob McLaury of McLaury Apiaries out of Libby organizes and restocks his wares in between customers. Traci Street photo.



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2026 Fair Schedule



Tuesday, Aug. 18

Register and weigh in livestock2 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Barn meetings immediately after weigh-in7 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug. 19

Swine showmanship8 a.m.
Sheep showmanship & market classesfollowing swine
Goat showmanship & market classes.....following sheep
4-H interview judging & 4-H Division K entries.....3 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 20

Swine market classes8 a.m.
Beef showmanship & market classesfollowing swine
Division K open youth registration12 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Registration for all exhibits12 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Register 4-H poultry, rabbits, pocket pets.....2 p.m.
Register 4-H horse show3 p.m.
Poultry show3 p.m.
Dog show registration5 p.m.
Dog costume contest, followed by dog show5:30 p.m.
Free concert with Holly VanBemmel.....6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Line dance demonstration at the fish pond pavilion.....7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 21

Judging Divisions A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H8 a.m.
4-H horse show9 a.m.
Safety presentation by Lincoln Electric Co-op9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Petting zoo opens.....10 a.m.
Exhibit barn hours.....10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Kidsville10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Community gardens open.....12 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Rabbit and pocket pet show and costume contest1 p.m.
Round Robin meeting, show to follow4 p.m.
Friday Night Games sign-up opens.....6:30 p.m.
Friday Night Games at the arena7 p.m.
Family dance at fish pond pavilionAfter games

Saturday, Aug. 22

Open class horse show8 a.m.
Kidsville9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Petting zoo opens.....10 a.m.
General exhibit barn hours.....10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Community Gardens open12 p.m. - 3 p.m.
4-H Youth Livestock Auction1 p.m.
The Bull Thing7 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 23

Petting zoo opens.....10 a.m.
Community church service at rodeo arena10 a.m.
General exhibit barn hours.....10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Animal barns closing.....12 p.m.
Community gardens open.....12 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Kidsville12 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Food court stage.....until 3 p.m.
Closing ceremony3 p.m.
General removal of all exhibits3 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Schedule provided is based on information as of the time of printing. For more information, please contact the fair office.