

"Hard work pays off for Concord teen who spent summer raising pigs for fair"

by Dave Weatherwax | Jackson Citizen Patriot
Saturday August 15, 2009, 10:35 PM

Armed with a scrubber and hose and wearing knee-high rubber boots, Cody Schneider prepped his two show pigs on the Thursday before fair week with a good bath.

They showed their appreciation by squealing and shaking soap and water all over their small pen.

"I know, you're almost done; you're almost clean, boy," Schneider told one of the pigs.

Cody then walked and weighed the pigs, Chum and Jolene, one last time before loading them into the trailer for the following day's weigh-in at the Jackson County Fair, which kicked off a week ago today.

The closure of the trailer door brought Cody, a 13-year-old from Concord, one step closer to the end of a journey that began Feb. 5 on Arbuckle Farms in Pulaski Township.

Cody has purchased his show pigs from Mike Arbuckle, leader of the 4-H group, Concord Contenders, for the last three years. Arbuckle is also a cousin of Cody's stepfather, Chad Vincent.

Cody assisted Arbuckle with things like ear notching, clipping teeth and administering vaccinations.

During the next few weeks, Cody spent time at the Arbuckle farm, watching the pigs' progress and taking notes in a pocket notebook about their structure and balance — the criteria on which they will be judged. He picked three pigs from the litter, and took them home in early April.

Most days after school Cody would head straight to the barn to feed, water and walk his show pigs. The routine was the same first thing in the morning before school, with him often rising before the sun to complete the chores.



Cody Schneider carries one of the three pigs he purchased in early April from Arbuckle Farms in Pulaski Township off the trailer to a small barn at his home in Concord.

"You see kids that are star athletes that spend days and hours and weeks practicing their sport. That's what Cody does with pigs. It's ongoing," Vincent said.

Cody began showing pigs at the county fair in 2006. That year his pigs came from the farm of his father, Brian Schneider of Concord. Cody didn't place in that year's competitions, but he said it was a learning experience.

He's been improving ever since. In 2007, his female pig was awarded Grand Champion Gilt as well as the highest award of Grand Champion Market Hog, which he said is one of his favorite fair memories.

"I felt excited and my pig kind of ran around the ring," he said.

Last year he won Junior Champion Showmanship, which includes participants who are ages 9 to 12 at the time of registration. The showmanship award is given to the child with the best presentation and knowledge of his or her pig.

His winning streak continued this year with both his gilt and barrow — a castrated male — winning first place in their respective classes. But his biggest accomplishment was his repeat in winning Junior Champion Showmanship.

"Showmanship is one of the biggest things that I like because it's where all the time and hard work comes in," Cody said. "Showmanship is the biggest thing I gun for. I think it's the most important thing too, because it shows that you worked with the animal."

Arbuckle said it's visible in the show ring how Schneider's hard work has paid off by seeing how calm his pig is and how easily it moves in response to him.

"Cody's got a bright future ahead of him," Arbuckle said. "He's got a lot of years that he's going to be right there, knocking on the door."#