

Sandoval County 4-H Youth Earn Top Honors at 2026 Sandoval County Fair, Set Their Sights on 2026 New Mexico State Fair

BERNALILLO, N.M. - September 2026 – Sandoval County 4-H youth are celebrating an impressive showing at the 2026 Sandoval County Fair, with local 4-H members earning top honors in both indoor exhibits and the Junior Livestock Show. For those whose projects qualified for the next level of competition, the hard work continues as they prepare to represent Sandoval County at the 2026 New Mexico State Fair, beginning September 10th at Expo New Mexico in Albuquerque.

The accomplishments represent months of preparation, hard work, learning, and dedication by Sandoval County 4-H members. From creative indoor projects to raising and caring for livestock, 4-H youth gain hands-on experience while developing skills in responsibility, leadership, communication, decision-making, and perseverance.

Sandoval County 4-H Indoor Exhibit Champions

Three Sandoval County 4-H members earned the highest honors in their respective age divisions for indoor exhibits. These Grand Champion exhibits were selected from among the first-place class winners who qualified to advance to the New Mexico State Fair:

- Senior Grand Champion: Mackenzie Blacksten, Corralitos 4-H
Category: 3-Tiered 50th Anniversary Cake
- Junior Grand Champion: Romie Perez, Placitas Bull Snakes 4-H
Category: Cross-Stitch Bee
- Novice Grand Champion: Savannah Burns, Corralitos 4-H
Category: 3-Piece Jewelry Set

These exhibits showcase the broad range of skills developed through 4-H projects, where youth have the opportunity to explore their interests, learn new techniques, and demonstrate their accomplishments through competition.

At the County level, 4-H Youth Hall exhibits are organized by age, department, and class divisions. Every first-place class winner qualifies to advance to the 4-H Youth Hall at the New Mexico State Fair. A total of 163 blue ribbon winners qualified to compete at the State Fair out of over 280 entries submitted.

From those first-place class winners, a Best of Division exhibit is selected, and those winners compete for Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion honors within each age division. High Point Individual awards are also presented based on cumulative points earned across a youth's exhibits.

The student 4-H Indoor Exhibit High Point Winners were Savannah Burns, Novice; Romie Perez, Junior; and Declan Padget, Senior.

The students highlighted represent the highest honors awarded in the Sandoval County indoor exhibits program, including Grand Champions and High Point Individuals. While the complete list of class winners is much longer, every first-place class winner is recognized as a State Fair qualifier and is eligible to advance to the New Mexico State Fair.

All first-place class winners, along with Grand and reserve champions, will advance to compete in the 4-H Youth Hall at the New Mexico State Fair, where qualifying 4-H members from across the state will showcase their projects and compete at the state level.

Sandoval County Fair Junior Livestock Show Champions

Sandoval County 4-H members also earned top honors in a variety of livestock categories during the 2026 Sandoval County Fair Junior Livestock Show:

- Cristiana Lopez - Grand Champion Heifer
- Alycia Herrera - Market Steer
- Aiden Bendzus - Dairy Goat
- Elena Trujillo - Market Goat
- Charly Anderson - Market Lamb
- Annalysia Trujillo - Market Swine
- Bryn Willis - Poultry
- Randy Rinaldi - Meat Poultry
- Cassidy Jackson - Champion Rabbit
- Caden Lopez - Meat Pen Rabbit
- Aubrianna Crowley - Roaster Rabbit

Each livestock project represents a significant investment of time and effort by the 4-H member. Youth are responsible for learning about animal care, nutrition, health, recordkeeping, and showmanship while developing a strong understanding of commitment and responsibility.

Qualifying Sandoval County 4-H livestock exhibitors will also can take what they have learned at the county level to the New Mexico State Fair, competing alongside 4-H youth from throughout New Mexico.

Building Skills Through 4-H

4-H is a Positive Youth Development organization delivered through the Cooperative Extension system in each state. Cooperative Extension is part of the nation's Land-Grant University System, connecting young people and communities with research-based education and resources through land-grant universities.

In New Mexico, New Mexico State University (NMSU) is the state's land-grant university, and NMSU Cooperative Extension provides educational opportunities to youth through the 4-H program in communities across the state.

The mission of the ACES Cooperative Extension Service is to provide the people of New Mexico with practical, research-based knowledge and programs to improve their quality of life.

Through 4-H, young people learn by doing. Projects can range from livestock and agriculture to food and nutrition, science, engineering, arts, leadership, and other areas of interest. The program is designed to help youth build practical skills and confidence while encouraging them to set goals, overcome challenges, and become active contributors to their communities.

For Sandoval County's 4-H members, the Sandoval County Fair provides an important opportunity to put those skills into practice and share their accomplishments with the community.

From the County Fair to the State Fair

For Sandoval County 4-H youth, the Sandoval County Fair is more than a competition; it is an important milestone in their 4-H experience. It gives young people an opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have developed throughout the year while receiving feedback from judges, families, volunteers, and community members.

For those whose projects and livestock have qualified to advance, the New Mexico State Fair opens September 10, 2026, at Expo New Mexico in Albuquerque. Sandoval County 4-H youth will join exhibitors from across New Mexico to showcase their accomplishments and compete at the state level.

The 4-H Youth Hall at the New Mexico State Fair provides a special showcase for qualifying 4-H indoor projects, allowing young exhibitors to display their work and represent their county at one of New Mexico's largest annual events.

"Our 4-H entries have grown beyond traditional arts and crafts to showcase increasingly skill-based projects, including beekeeping, sport fishing, advanced fiber craft, horticulture, blacksmithing, and welding," said Madeline K. Gurney, FCS/4-H Extension Agent. "We would like to thank the Amigos and the County Fair Board for their continuous support of our 4-H'ers and their accomplishments. We would like to invite the public to serve on both of these organizations to help support the youth of Sandoval County."

The Sandoval County 4-H program congratulates all this year's exhibitors and their families, volunteers, and supporters whose time and encouragement help make these accomplishments possible.

Congratulations to our Sandoval County 4-H champions, and best of luck at the 2026 New Mexico State Fair!

About NMSU Cooperative Extension 4-H

New Mexico 4-H is the youth development program of New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service. Through hands-on learning experiences, 4-H helps young people develop leadership, life, and career skills while exploring interests and building connections with their communities. As part of the national Cooperative Extension and Land-Grant University System,

The mission of the ACES Cooperative Extension Service is to provide the people of New Mexico with practical, research-based knowledge and programs to improve their quality of life.

New Mexico 4-H brings the educational resources and expertise of NMSU to youth and families throughout the state.

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity employer and educator. NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are cooperating.

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