

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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## Master Showmanship opens up connections for youth; personally and professionally

To some, showing livestock may appear to be limited to the skills demonstrated within the show ring. But to those who have experienced it, they know the physical skills, life skills, and personal character development go much deeper. And participating in master showmanship contests takes it all to the next level.

Master showmanship requires youth to show swine, cattle, and sheep; rather than just showing the one or two species youth are raising and involved with in 4-H. The goal of the competition is to showcase each individual's skills and knowledge across the three species.

"It is very rare that a 4-H member would have all three animal species," commented Kristi Smith, [Peoria County 4-H](#) program coordinator.

"When youth participate in master showmanship they are responsible for finding their own livestock. They have to pay attention to the other livestock shows going on, notice the temperament of the animals, and the other showmen. Then they have to step out of their comfort zones and ask to borrow an animal.....sometimes from a fellow master showmanship contestant.

"They are forced to reach across the aisle and ask their competitors to help them out. The exhibitors have to put someone else's needs before their own to let them borrow an animal."

It is not uncommon to see the youth teaching each other how best to show that particular animal and sharing insights about the species that the judge may quiz them about.

"This takes 'pledging your hands to larger service' to a higher level," Kristi said in reference to the 4-H pledge.

Locally, each county offers a county-level master showmanship contest to select a winner to advance to the state contest. For 22 years, [Illinois Farm Bureau](#) and [RFD Radio Network](#) have hosted the [Master Showmanship Contest](#) at the [Illinois State Fair](#).

### Local 2022 Master Showmanship Winners and State Fair Awards

- Fulton County—Liz Hayden: 6<sup>th</sup> Place Overall & Reserve Champion Sheep
- Peoria County—Kyle Bird: 4<sup>th</sup> Place Overall & Reserve Champion Beef
- Tazewell County—Lydia Rogers

"Kyle is a member of the Laura Winners 4-H club. He took his own swine and cattle, but had to borrow a sheep for the state contest," explained Kristi. "Now he is studying agriculture education at [Illinois Central College](#). I know from my own experience, the knowledge and confidence gained in 4-H programs like this are incredibly valuable to our adult lives and future careers."

2015 Peoria County 4-H Champion Showman Andy Smith now works as a livestock producer in Peoria County. He had the following remarks: "Master Showmanship really opened my eyes to the other opportunities that I could explore in animal science. I found a passion for cattle, which is a species that I did not do a lot with before. I really enjoy working with them now."



Photo by Kristi Smith | Illinois Extension

*Lydia Rogers, Tazewell County; Kyle Bird, Peoria County; and Liz Hayden, Fulton County are the local 4-H members who participated in the Master Showmanship Contest at the 2022 Illinois State Fair. Master Showmanship contests are a youth development program that challenges youth to learn and grow in skills, knowledge, and character.*

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