

## **HISTORY**

The Holiday Classic began in Hearne and included surrounding counties in 1991 to provide a hands-on educational event for youth, parents and volunteers involved in 4-H and FFA livestock projects. As the District 8 4-H Progress Show numbers began to decline agents agreed that the Holiday Classic was the premiere event to utilize in place of the progress show. In 2007 the Holiday Classic was offered district wide in place of the Progress Show at the Heart of Texas Fairgrounds in Waco. All counties were asked to find sponsors and donate at least \$500 to pay for expenses/prizes. Since 2009 the District 8 Holiday Classic has been held at the Bell County Expo Center in Belton, Texas.

4-H and FFA families bring their cattle, lambs, swine, and goats to learn more about the responsibilities that are attributed to exhibiting livestock. During the two day program, experts in livestock and youth development provide educational, hands-on training for attendees in both group and individual settings. After the educational program, youth have the opportunity to exhibit their projects for practice and receive advice on how to manage their animals. Youth are provided the opportunity to practice what they have learned the day before, and it is in a “show setting.” The target audience is youth and families that are in their first three years of participation. However, many families come back each year to learn the latest information from our panel of expert speakers.

Texas 4-H and FFA members are raising more than 76,000 livestock projects annually, including beef cattle, lamb, swine, and meat goats. This results in almost 15 million pounds of carcass that are harvested each year. With the tremendous amount of product that 4-H and FFA members are contributing to the food supply, along comes the responsibility to produce a safe and wholesome product for consumers. In 2007 Quality Counts curriculum was added to the program in order to provide an opportunity for young Texas producers to learn personal character attributes and acceptable livestock management practices associated with these projects.

## **PROGRAM AUDIENCE**

The Holiday Classic is unique because it is completely free to the families with all expenses being paid through local sponsorships. The Holiday Classic is open to all youth and specifically marketed to the 21 counties in District 8: Bell, Bosque, Comanche, Coryell, Eastland, Ellis, Erath, Falls, Freestone, Hamilton, Hill, Hood, Johnson, Leon, Limestone, McLennan, Milam, Navarro, Robertson, Somervell and Williamson. Youth attendance peaked in 2013 with 800 youth attending the educational sessions. Total attendance in 2013 was 2,477.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Organization is the key to any successful program and the Holiday Classic Team works very hard to ensure that it remains well organized keeping communication channels open among all agents and ensuring that all are involved and have input in the educational program. It is currently overseen by an Executive Committee which is made up of eleven people. Representation comes from Ag/NR and 4-H Agents from all of District 8, the District 8 4-H Specialist, Ag/NR Regional Program Leader and the District 8 District Extension Administrator. In addition a volunteer leader serves as the treasurer for the Holiday Classic. Each individual specie has a committee that plans and implements the educational portion of the Holiday Classic. The specie committees include lambs, goats, swine and beef. Each committee consists of co-chairs and members. In addition to the specie committees agents organized an evaluation committee, publicity committee, steering committee, mentor training, meal committee, facilities committee and office management. The District 8 4-H Council Advisors also use the District 4-H Council to sale raffle tickets and assist with other needs. Edward Schneider served as Holiday Classic Chairman/Manager from its inception until 2008. In 2008 Shane McLellan assisted Edward and took over as Chairman/Manager in 2009. He served in that capacity until 2015. Since 2016, Sheryl Raley Long became the Chairman/Manager of Holiday Classic.

Each specie committee relies on individuals that are directly involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Holiday Classic. The duties of a committee include: identifying topics, identifying speakers, identifying judges, turning in pen request to Bell County Expo, shavings request, set up, implementing the actual education clinics on the first day, finding sponsors, designing and running the shows on the second day, preparing and conducting evaluations across all clinics amongst the 4 species, feeding 1,000+ people a steak supper on Saturday night, turning in request for expenses to the exec committee, showmanship voucher distribution, prize voucher distribution, show supply give aways, requesting and providing sound system equipment, power point proxima/computers as needed, chairs, table set ups the list goes on and on. Each person on each committee works as a unit with each committee working together to offer the best youth livestock educational clinic available in the world, and it cost the kids \$0. No other organization or entity offers an educational program for the youth of Texas for \$0.

### **PROGRAM COST/FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

All expenses are paid through local sponsorships, including all meals, judges and speakers travel expenses, partial cost recovery and prizes. The Holiday Classic Team has consistently worked together to raise the money to cover expenses. Agents work with local supporters in the communities to secure donations and sponsorships and continue to increase the number of sponsors each year with 39 for the 2014 event. The Holiday Classic annually cost \$30,601 to offer the best youth livestock educational program. In 2014 county agents raised \$20,338 in sponsorship and the Bell County Expo provided the additional \$10,263 for building usage fees. Each year counties raise \$16,000-\$20,000 for show expenses and the Bell County Expo covers all building use fees.

### **PROGRAM IMPACT**

For the past four years a retrospective post evaluation has been distributed to all youth in attendance at the 4-H Holiday Classic during their specie clinics and was tailored to fit the educational topics covered during that time. Over the years the evaluations have been modified to provide the Holiday Classic Team with the most relevant information to utilize for program improvement and interpretation of the educational goals of the event.

### **Significant Results**

Average attendance of 51.5% of attendees respond each year this is their first time to attend Holiday Classic. On average, 70% of participants indicated they plan to make a change or take action based on the knowledge they learned at the Holiday Classic.

### **Economic Impact**

Every year, over 500 youth participants respond to the evaluation, these 4-H and FFA members are producing an estimated product valued at \$458,967.20 that is impacting the livestock industry in Texas. In addition, an estimated 226,254 pounds of carcass are entering the food supply just from youth that participate in Holiday Classic.

When purchasing their beef, swine, sheep, and goat projects, youth indicated they spent an average of \$1,243.64 for their beef animal, \$402.63 for a hog, \$583.16 for a lamb, and \$467.31 for a goat. Using these averages and multiplying by the number of head these youth have on feed, they are contributing an estimated **\$709,328.74 to the livestock industry** in the state of Texas when purchasing their animals.

Results indicate that youth are adopting practices and gaining the knowledge that instructors have set out to teach. Events like the Holiday Classic project training target new 4-H family's and feeders and all involved have witnessed high levels of intended behavior and knowledge change. All 4-H and FFA member that participate in the Holiday Classic continue to make an **economic impact** as they grow and raise a safe and wholesome product that will enter the food supply. It is an added bonus that these youth participants also learn **life skills** and **character values** that will benefit them greatly.

*“There is no doubt that that the youth in our communities need a place to go to learn about their animal projects and this is the event to do that.”* Josh Elkins, Robertson County 4-H Adult Leader

*“With the emphasis on responsibility, ethical animal science practices and sportsmanship the Holiday Classic is a hallmark for families who participate.”* Wes Allison, Heart of Texas Fair

*“There is no other workshop, clinic and/or educational program conducted in the State that provides the resource materials, individual consultation, and actual show ring experience that is made available through the Holiday Classic.”* Kyle L. Smith, Retired Extension Executive Associate Director

*“The livestock project is challenging. Those close to the project will speak of the ups and downs associated with raising livestock. However, with the right guidance, the life skill payoff to the family is unmatched. The Holiday Classic has been meeting challenges and providing solutions for over two decades now. Furthermore, it has served a model for the rest of the state. Livestock project families can now attend the Southern Classic, Coastal Bend Classic, District 7 Livestock Project Workshop, East Texas Show Star Series, Gulf Coast Classic and many more livestock project workshops. Texas leads the world in youth livestock projects, educational programs like the Holiday Classic will keep it that way.”*  
Dr. Billy Zanolini, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist

*“The Holiday Classic is without question one of the highest educationally impactful programs in the history of the agency. Quite simply, it is the program that has set the tone for all youth livestock educational programs. With the crystal clear goal of education (instead of competition), it has long served as the barometer for all youth programs. Why? Because it is an excellent mixture of youth educational programs, family educational programs, volunteer educational programs, a positive spirit of competition, and most importantly, it is built on a culture and environment of informal education and fellowship among families, County Extension Agents, and industry leaders. Very few programs have reached the level of joint collaborative educational efforts like the Holiday Classic. There are literally hundreds of educational programs that have positively impacted Texans over the 100+ year history of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and while all are meaningful and noteworthy, the Holiday Classic rises above almost all of them. It is a legacy program. It is a difference maker. It is the best of the best”.*  
Dr. Chris Boleman, Assistant Director and State Leader for Texas 4-H Youth Development