

# 4-H Fair keeps kids riding tall

Even those with uncooperative horses enjoy the challenge of competition.

By Mark R. Fletcher  
News-Leader

Some won, some lost, and some occasionally fought with their horses, but more importantly — their parents said — the competitors had fun.

Parents cheered and shouted words of encouragement from the bleachers as kids from across the Ozarks competed in the 4-H Fair's horse show Saturday morning at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds.

Saturday was the final day of the two-day Greene County 4-H Fair. Saturday competitions included a sheep show, dairy show and the horse show.

Amber Hicks, a 13-year-old from Walnut Grove, rode her appaloosa Joker in several events, including pole-bending.

Joker had a mind of his own, and if Joker didn't want to be ridden around the poles, it wasn't going to happen.

Amber finally managed to convince Joker to try, and received accolades from the crowd for her pains.

It was a victory, even if she was disqualified after her horse broke the timer.

Amber wasn't alone in her con-

See 4-H, Page 3B

Continued from 1B

test of wills. Several other riders had to coax, cajole, tease and plead with their horses to perform.

Another girl was nearly disqualified when her horse wouldn't even turn around and look at the poles. He finally did, and they finished with a respectable time, accompanied by cheers and applause.

Amber, who attends Walnut Grove High School, was still enthusiastic about the day's event. "It's great; I love it," she said.

She also has words of high praise for her 4-H group, the Willard Young

Riders.

"They're a good group," she said. "They do lots of activities with horses."

Amber's mother, 32-year-old Jana Hicks, attended the event to watch her daughter compete.

"My parents support me in everything I do," Amber said.

Riding and showing horses is a Hicks family tradition.

Her mother has been involved with showing horses for many years.

"I've showed horses all my life and even been to nationals," Jana Hicks said.

Winning ribbons was nice, but the

kids, and their parents, say just being there was rewarding.

Regina Dowell, 35, from Willard said she and her daughter, 14-year-old Ashley, "had a wonderful time whether she won or not."

This is the first year the Willard High School freshman competed in the 4-H event, Regina Dowell said.

Even if winning isn't everything, Dowell still found it emotional watching her daughter compete.

"Excited, you feel nervous and sad and happy," Dowell said.

"All your different emotions get mixed together. You're always proud of them whatever they do."