

## FFA Kids Find Adventure in Rural Life

by Helen T. Hertz

Last summer a group of young FFA members visited with Meredith Hodges at her Lucky Three Ranch in Loveland, Colo. These kids came from all over the state for an FFA convention, in nearby Greeley. Their leader arranged a tour of Meredith's place, and boy did they get a kick out of it. Like just about everyone who visits Lucky Three, the kids were smitten with the mules and donkeys and wowed by the amazing equine art. They asked questions and listened well and left affirmed in their belief that the world of agriculture holds many exciting opportunities.

Future Farmers of America, now the National FFA Organization, is the largest youth organization in the country, with more than 500,000 members and attendance at their annual conference cresting 54,000. Members age 12-21 participate in programs designed to nurture leadership and personal growth and prepare them for success in more than 300 careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture.

"FFA frees these kids from any sense of limitation," says Meredith, who was impressed by her curious guests. "Coming here and learning more about longears and life on a ranch supports that sense of opportunity. I was lucky enough to find what I love and pursue it wholeheartedly for many years. These kids can do the same, and an experience like the tour gives them new ideas that expand their horizons."

What's sure to be another memorable experience for FFA members comes this New Year's, when RFD-TV will sponsor the "FFA Today" float in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California. Designed to represent FFA members past and present, the 75-foot-long, 30-foot-tall float will be decorated with gigantic sculptures of FFA members and 10,000 flowers, along with corn, wheat, soybeans and other American agricultural commodities.

"When we first learned of the 2010 Rose Parade theme, "A Cut Above the Rest," we immediately thought of FFA and saw this as an opportunity to not only pay tribute to the world's premiere youth organization, but at the same time to also showcase FFA activities on a world stage in this continuing effort to connect and educate the urban world about the positive aspects of rural America," says Patrick Gottsch, founder and president of RFD-TV.

RFD-TV will air a live broadcast of the parade as well as a "Making of the FFA Float" special. Check your local listing for times.

This holiday season RFD-TV will air another program that FFA members and kids everywhere will love. "Jasper Goes To Bishop," the new children's program from Meredith and Lucky Three Productions, is an amazing blend of animation and live-action that not only salutes rural life and its splendorous display at Bishop Mule Days, but also delivers a powerful, positive message about what we can achieve with big dreams, persistence and a little help from our friends. The program will air on RFD-TV Wednesday, Dec. 23, and again Wednesday, Dec. 30. Check your local listing for times. The "Jasper Goes to Bishop" DVD, complete with fun special features is on sale now. To order, please visit [www.JasperTheMule.com](http://www.JasperTheMule.com) or call 800-816-7566.

This holiday season is ripe with opportunities to embrace the rural life and those who support it. Meredith and all of us at Lucky Three Ranch wish our friends at FFA and all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!