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## **Local Talent Shines in Open Class Exhibits at County Fair**

July is here, and for many area counties, that means fair time!

As the scent of funnel cakes drifts through the air and the sound of laughter echoes through the barns, another cherished tradition is quietly drawing admiration — the Open Class fair exhibits.

From homemade jams and hand-stitched quilts to photography, painted ceramics, and garden-grown produce, local residents of all ages showcase their creativity and skills in a variety of categories. Open Class exhibits — open to anyone in the county, not just 4-H members — are a longstanding feature of rural fairs, providing a chance for the community to participate, compete, and connect.

Open Class exhibits are the heart of many fairs. If you bake, sew, paint, or grow flowers, you can enter. Fair entries are on display, and attendees can join in celebrating community craftsmanship. For many, it's a family tradition. There's no better way to honor your grandma than to enter her famous pie in the local county fair. Photography is always a popular 4-H project, and open class allows non-4-H kids and adults to display their creative works as well.

Many local fairs have special categories for kids and also for those older than 75.

Open class differs from 4-H in that there is typically a first, second, and third place awarded in each category. While 4-H projects are judged against a rubric, Open Class projects are judged competitively. Most exhibitors agree, however, it's not about the ribbon. It's about sharing something meaningful and personal with the community.

Open classes at local fairs are each a little different. You can check out options for entry in the Wildcat District by visiting our website online at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.k-state.edu/4-h/county-fairs>.

“If you’ve never entered before, try it this year,” encouraged Julie Beeman, Wildcat District Extension Agent. “You’ll be surprised how rewarding it is — I am not an expert seamstress, but was really proud to enter the pillowcase I made last year in the Crawford County Fair.”

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