

Jacob Grinstead - Horses

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve.” That’s the motto of the National FFA Organization for high school agriculture students, and it’s an apt description of the equine career development of a young man from rural Kansas. This is today’s Kansas Profile.

Jacob Grinstead is from south central Kansas. His family lives between Hutchinson and Buhler, where Jacob went to high school. At an early age, he was exposed to his family’s love of horses. The Grinstead family raises, shows and markets performance horses.

“My first memories were sitting in the bleachers at jackpots (competitions) watching dad rope,” Jacob said. He helped with chores as a kid. When his older sister went to college, his interests and opportunities grew. He showed horses in regional shows and developed interests in other aspects of the equine industry.

Jacob enrolled in agricultural education classes at Buhler High School and joined FFA where he practiced and developed his equestrian skills. As the FFA motto says, he was learning to do and doing to learn.

Grinstead Horses concentrates on show horses. That strength continues, but as a sophomore, Jacob approached his parents about diversifying their efforts to include competitive rodeo horses. With his parents’ support, they bought additional horses and Jacob started competing in roping events.

Over time, his skills and responsibilities expanded. He transitioned from being a caretaker to a manager of the horses. He was earning to live, working in the family business and helping it to expand.

As one might guess, he was very good at selecting top quality horses. His high school horse judging team won first in state competition and went on to nationals. He later put together a state 4-H horse judging team which represented Kansas at the Western National Roundup Judging Contest and won sixth place in the nation. In Reno County, he was the top youth livestock judge for three years.

Jacob earned the 4-H Key Award and was elected as a state FFA officer. He is now a freshman in agribusiness at Kansas State University.

The final part of the FFA motto is “living to serve.” Besides serving as a state FFA officer, he got involved with the Kansas Paint Horse Association. Again, his responsibilities grew. He had volunteered to help with local horse shows, and in 2014 he was hired by the Kansas State Fair to be a ring steward. The following year he served as an announcer at KPHA shows and was later appointed as a director of the American Junior Paint Horse Association. He recruited and helped other youth members.

One interesting situation came up in his home county. For years, the county fair horse show was scheduled on Sunday. For some families, such as Jacob’s, this caused a conflict with the church schedule. “Youth were faced with a decision to attend morning church services or to prepare for exhibition,” Jacob said. He found a creative alternative which enabled them to do both. Jacob worked with other youth and families and the organizers of the fair, and put on an optional church service on horseback for the horse

show participants and guests. In its second year, that service has grown to include people from other counties.

Jacob's growth in the equine industry has been notable. In 2016, he was one of four finalists for the National FFA Proficiency Award in Equine Science Placement. He was recognized on stage in Indianapolis at the National FFA Convention, attended by some 65,000 members, teachers, and supporters of FFA. This is quite an achievement for someone from the rural community of Buhler, population 1,335 people. Now, that's rural.

"My thanks go to good friends, great family, and dedicated advisors," Jacob said.

"Learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve." It's the motto for FFA and a good motto for life. Jacob Grinstead is applying it in his daily life as he advances in the horse and rodeo industry. He is making a difference with a life of service to the equine industry which he loves. That's something from which a lot of us can learn.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.