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# Wilhoit happy to serve Lea County

LOVINGTON, N.M. – His own children are in their 30s, yet Clyde Wilhoit continues to serve the youth of Lea County.

Andy Wilhoit started showing animals at the Lea County Fair and Rodeo a quarter century ago. His younger brother, Trace, followed suit, and it seemed like a good time for them to learn the lessons that come with showing exhibits at the local fair.

Clyde Wilhoit had shown pigs and horses when he was a kid, raised on a farm near Portales, New Mexico, about 90 miles north of Lovington. He moved to town in 1978 and served as the yard manager at the local livestock auction. Once his boys got involved in showing, he recalled all the important parts of life that he gained while living on a farm in eastern New Mexico.

He still shares that with people who ask him, and it's why he's the livestock superintendent at the Lea County Fair and Rodeo, which will have its 10-day run from Friday, July 29-Saturday, Aug. 6, at the Lea County Fairgrounds in Lovington.

"My first year as the swine superintendent was 1999," Wilhoit said. "I did that for 21 years, then they asked me to be the livestock superintendent."

He went from assigning pens to swine exhibitors and making sure all things with the pig show went right to overseeing every other animal superintendent before the fair and during their time on the fairgrounds. He handles the entire management for all eight species that are shown and offers himself as a support system or a backup plan if situations arise.

"I enjoy doing this," said Wilhoit, who works for Legacy Reserves when he's not volunteering. "I have helped with anything they've asked me to do in the livestock barn. That's pretty much what I've been doing since we got started."

Andy is now 35 years old, and Trace is 31. Both of the Wilhoit boys are married with three children each.

"Both of my sons are involved as the swine superintendents," Wilhoit said. "They enjoyed their time exhibiting at the fair, and they're both volunteers now also."

While pigs seem to be the favored choice for the Wilhoits, there have been several species they have shown over their years as youngsters. Clyde Wilhoit actually raises and sells show goats. Everything he does with the fair is because of the children and what they get out of their experiences.

"I try not to butt into other people's business, but if I'm asked to help, I do," he said. "I think it is good because of what it teaches the exhibitors. It teaches the responsibility of caring for something else and seeing a project through to the end."

"The best part of the fair, to me, is the livestock shows because it's something for the future of Lea County. It's for these kids who exhibit what they have raised and show what they have done in the summer, take pride in what they've done and hopefully make the sale at the end."