

Fort Morgan named Outstanding Colorado Young Farmer Chapter Community Service Award winner

Group also named runner-up for state's Outstanding Chapter Award

Last November, the Fort Morgan Colorado Young Farmer Chapter held its annual game night for a cause. The cause in 2010 was to raise money for the All American Beef Battalion, Steaks for Troops Campaign. The event raised \$4,700. That no doubt, bought quite a few steaks for soldiers and also helped the Chapter capture the prestigious 2011 Outstanding Colorado Young Farmer Chapter Community Service Award.

In addition to taking home this much sought after award, the Fort Morgan Chapter was also named the runner-up for the 2011 Outstanding Colorado Young Farmer Chapter Award. The St. Vrain Chapter, headquartered in Longmont, CO, won the overall state title.

Each year the Chapter picks a cause to be the beneficiary of the event, ranging from a sick child to a group needing financial assistance in order to better itself. Members chose the All American Beef Battalion Steaks for Troops Campaign. This organization goes to military bases all around the country and puts on free steak feeds for soldiers and their families when they return home from active service.

"Because this organization is founded around giving thanks to our troops from those of us in agriculture, we felt a strong connection," explains Bryson Miller, Chapter president. The nearly \$5,000 raised came from proceeds raised during an evening that included a local steak feed, a Texas Hold'em tournament, several other games, a 'blow up the car' event and a flat screen TV giveaway.

Fort Morgan competes aggressively in all areas of state competition and captured the best state Chapter category in 2005 and again in 2009. The last time the Fort Morgan Chapter took the top community service award was in 2005.

Under the leadership of Chapter President Bryson Miller and Chapter Advisors Dennis Bostron, Greg Ditter and Danica McComb, the 56-member Fort Morgan Chapter has an arm's length list of community service and educational activities it does each year. The Steaks for Troops project was brand new to the Chapter in 2010 and was just one more way that many in the Morgan County community and beyond benefit from the work the Chapter does.

Community service activities for the year included sponsorship of the catch-it-pig contest at the Morgan County Fair and a barbecue, also at the fair that takes place prior to the livestock sale and draws approximately 1,000 people each year. The CYF members hold an annual scholarship golf tournament to raise money to fund an annual \$6,000 scholarship, given out over four years time, to a high school senior planning to study something agriculture related at college.



Fort Morgan Outstanding Chapter Community Service Award and Chapter Runner up Danica McComb—Advisor and Bryson Miller—President.

The Chapter works in conjunction with the CSU Extension Service each January to provide Ag in the Classroom activities in local elementary schools. The Young Farmers provide an in-class agriculture education workshop for the children, followed by members of the Young Farmer Chapter traveling with these classes to attend the National Western Stock Show. An assessment of the effectiveness of the program is done. The children are quizzed at the start of the program regarding how much they know about various aspects of agriculture. A week later, after students have spent time at the stock show in the

company of these older mentors, they are tested once again to see how much they have learned and retained about agriculture.

Two of the other most successful and satisfying events sponsored this year by the Fort Morgan Young Farmers is Doink's Annual Harvest for Life Blood Drive, held in honor of a past member and sponsor, Don "Doink" Lebsock. This year, 48 people donated blood. A food drive, held in conjunction with the Boy Scouts of Morgan County, benefits the Caring Ministries food bank in Morgan County. The Boy Scouts gather the canned food and then Young Farmer Chapter members sort and box it into family size packages to be given out to the hungry.

In May of 2010, the Fort Morgan Chapter held a Rain Dance which included an oyster fry and was also a membership drive. It resulted in the recruitment of eight new members and a little extra rain, so they like to think.

To celebrate the Chapter's 40th anniversary, the group's 2010 annual meeting included inviting all of the past presidents to the banquet. Twenty seven of the past 40 presidents were present, including Ed Fritzler who was the Chapter's very first leader.

The Fort Morgan Chapter's list of activities goes on and on and includes top-placing entries in the July Fourth and Christmas parades plus a Halloween party. But, it is not all fun and games. The group held an educational session on farm safety in which the Morgan County Ambulance Service hosted a CPR certification course. This was combined with a first response program by Morgan County Sheriff Jim Crone. The group did educational tours of Cargill and Kay Jan, Inc. in 2010 with plans to also visit Leprino Foods, Five Rivers Feedlot and the Sterling Ethanol Plant in early 2011.

Last but not least, the Chapter has spent considerable time updating its' directory which now includes 56 members and more than a 100 sponsors. The group developed an e-mail data base and a Facebook page which allows the members to network and stay informed.