

Pigs with Purpose: How a Kentucky FFA alumna and her daughter serve Oklahoma communities

FFA week commemorates service and leadership in agriculture throughout the United States. One Oklahoma family is fulfilling that legacy with roots that reach from Cashion, Oklahoma all the way back to Greensburg, Kentucky. Holly Carroll (daughter of Bill and Karen Gilpin) is a former Kentucky FFA State President and Green County High School FFA Chapter alumna who now lives in the small town of Cashion, Oklahoma with her daughter, Maggie Carroll. The mother-daughter duo is continuing to fulfill the FFA motto that Holly was taught as a teenager in Greensburg of "Living to Serve."



Photos submitted

Eight-year-old Maggie Carroll lives to serve as she donates her pig to the Pork for Packs program.

When Maggie Carroll led her pig, Brownie, out of the show ring for the last time during her first year of showing swine, she didn't realize it would be the moment that taught her what the FFA motto, "Living to Serve," really means. She cried as her mom, Holly, led Brownie away to join hundreds of other pigs being donated to Pork for Packs, a program started by the Oklahoma Farm Bureau to combat hunger among children. However, Maggie quickly realized the importance of her donation. "My mom pulled me aside and gently told me where Brownie was going and why. Later that year, I saw some actual pork sticks, and it hit me—these [pigs] are going

to a good cause." The realization motivated her to continue giving.

Now, nearly seven years later Maggie, a member of the Cashion FFA chapter, continues to donate her pigs annually. What started as a tearful goodbye has grown into a statewide effort to fight hunger.

In Oklahoma, one in every four children suffers from food insecurity. First launched twelve years ago, Pork for Packs is a program that continues to combat those statistics, turning donated show pigs into pork sticks for children struggling with food insecurity. Created by the Oklahoma Pork Council in partnership with Farm Bureau, the program initially began

as the Beef Battalion, a way to get beef to soldiers in need. However, once things changed globally and the number of deployed units lowered, the program shifted from beef to swine and focused on supporting local and regional food banks.

Pork for Packs is a very important program to the Carroll family, with Holly being the membership director at Farm Bureau, involved in the program since its creation, and Maggie being heavily involved in showing pigs.

Every year since Brownie was donated, the Carrolls have contributed two pigs to be processed into pork sticks for children in need. As a family, the Carrolls make an ef-

fort to volunteer at the food bank every other month. "It's an incredible feeling when your family serves together," Holly says when reflecting on their hard work. "We serve, and we serve together. No matter what age your kids are, they have a place, they can give back, and they can even be right beside you, living the example that you're leading."

Additionally, Maggie attended the Oklahoma Pork Council's first Youth Pork Advocates Day. "We were connected to people who had shown pigs and are now still in the industry." She explains, "I learned so much about the mission of the Oklahoma Pork Council and how my own efforts are actually making a difference."



Maggie Carroll with her grandfather, Bill Gilpin (1974-75 Kentucky FFA State Vice President) at the Kentucky FFA State Convention last summer.

Looking ahead, Maggie and Holly both have high expectations for this generation of FFA members in addressing the issues of hunger and making service a priority. "The agriculture Community is the most giving Community in the entire world," Holly continues, "people in agriculture are always willing to give, and that's really where the heart of this program is." Maggie and Holly both agree that communication is key to growing Pork for Packs further across Oklahoma and beyond. "If we can just convey this to younger genera-

tions, they can start advocating," Maggie adds. "Service shouldn't be our last priority. It's in everything that we do. The future lies in 'Living to Serve', as the FFA motto mandates. I'm just grateful that I've been able to assist in addressing a problem in my Community and hopefully inspiring others to do the same."

To the Carroll family, giving is more than an act of service, it's a legacy to be shared through generations of FFA members. For this mother-daughter duo, living the FFA motto can happen anywhere, anytime.



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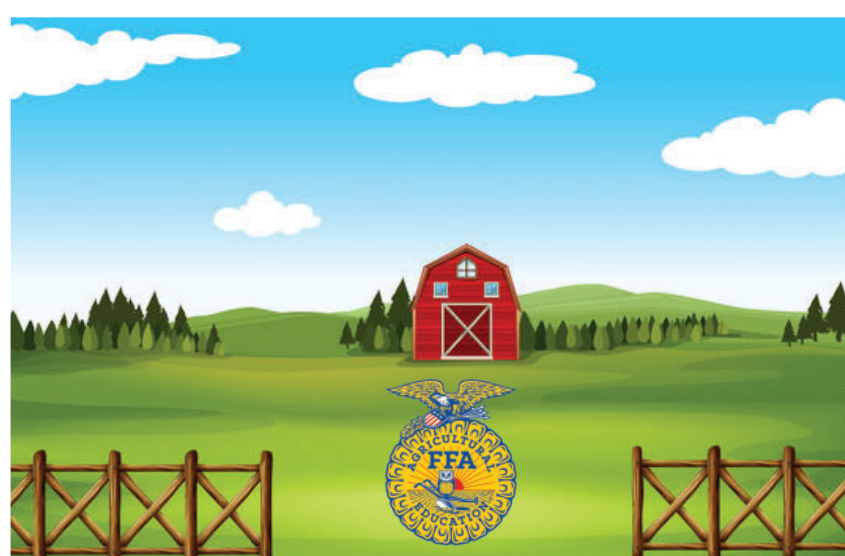
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