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Riverview BeefBuilder Program Gives 4-H Youth Hands-On Experience Raising Cattle

Riverview-sponsored program invests in young people across Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota through hands-on agricultural education

MORRIS, Minn. [9/2/2026] — Riverview is continuing its investment in local youth through its **BeefBuilder Program**, a hands-on program that gives 4-H members the opportunity to raise, care for and show a BeefBuilder calf.

This year, **72 4-H members across Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota** participated in the program, including 34 in South Dakota, 8 in North Dakota and 30 in Minnesota.

The BeefBuilder Program reflects Riverview's commitment to investing in young people in the communities where it operates. The program is designed to make it easier for youth to gain firsthand experience raising cattle, regardless of their background or resources. Participating 4-H members receive a BeefBuilder calf at a reduced cost, along with education, resources and support to help them successfully take on the project.

A **BeefBuilder** is the result of breeding beef genetics into dairy cattle, giving participants a unique opportunity to learn about both the dairy and beef sides of agriculture.

Each spring, interested 4-H members apply for the program and receive their calves in May. From there, participants take responsibility for feeding, caring for, and managing their animals throughout the summer. They learn practical skills in animal health and husbandry while experiencing firsthand the time, responsibility and commitment that go into raising

cattle. Depending on location, Riverview also provides participants with starter supplies and feed to help them get underway.

The educational experience extends beyond caring for the animal. Participants also learn more about dairy and beef production and have opportunities to build communication skills as they share what they have learned. In South Dakota and North Dakota, for example, participants complete an educational display as part of their project and present it alongside their calf.

The experience culminates at local county fairs and achievement days, where participants show the calves they have spent months raising and preparing.

“I wish this program would have been available to me when I was a kid,” said Kayla Schmidt, Community Outreach at Riverview. “I’ve really enjoyed watching youth try something new, seeing personal growth and goals achieved, and seeing them build new friendships outside the show ring.”

For Riverview, the BeefBuilder Program is about more than preparing an animal for the show ring. It provides young people with meaningful exposure to agriculture while helping them develop responsibility, confidence, and practical skills they can carry with them well beyond the fair.

The experience can continue beyond a participant’s first summer. In South Dakota and North Dakota, 4-H members may bring their steers back for a second year to compete in a Riverview-sponsored class, and participants may apply again in future years to raise another calf and continue building on what they have learned.

Photos: Lauren Eldman (Clark County Fair, SD), Cayden Schmidt (Hamlin County Fair, SD)