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*Clover Connection*

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John Henry. Probably not the typical name for a market lamb, but he was one I had picked out (and named for reasons I can't remember). My family had a couple of portable sheds when we first started out with our sheep herd, before we moved a full-fledged barn onto our homestead. We had a series of corral panels to make separate pens and alleyways to move our multitude of lambs around.

When I think about John Henry, I remember my brother's first year in 4-H. He of course, had some sheep and also a bucket calf. We were at our stockyards about a half mile south of our house where we kept his calf. I remember the first attempt at breaking it lead on a halter. My folks had instructed him to "not let go" of the rope. Turns out, the rambunctious calf had different plans than learning to walk along with a lead rope.

After the calf took off and dragged my brother halfway around our corral, my mom was screaming to "let go of the rope!" Fast forward 4 years and I found myself in a similar situation. I was at the end of the alleyway made of portable corral panels with a rope halter. It was my intention to catch John Henry. My mom and brother were moving him up so I could grab him. I had been instructed to stay in the middle of the alley. The next thing I remembered was lying on the ground while looking up at John Henry trampling over me.

Over the years, 4-H has taught me a lot lessons. Probably most importantly to dust myself off, put the pieces back together and try again; even if you get trampled over. I know I've mentioned before that pretty much all of my friends and family think I am crazy based on the variety of things I do for my job. This morning I was standing in line with 25 pieces of foam

board at the dollar tree and this afternoon, I'll be out validating some heifers for the major shows.

What is the least favorite part of my work? Without a doubt it is tattooing and nose printing lambs. Their ears are much too hairy to get a nice tattoo and their noses way too tiny to get a decent print. What is my favorite activity? Cleaning muffin crumbs out of my car.

This might sound strange, but cleaning crumbs out of my car means that a few kids got to giggle and have a blast at 4-H camp over the weekend. They got to have s'mores and experience vespers around a camp fire, maybe for the first time. They got to meet 4-Her's from all over East Texas, some of which may become lifelong friends.

So, if you ever see me out and about standing in line with foam board (or multiple bags of spaghetti and marshmallows), or if I'm down at the car wash cleaning out my car you can bet that it involves some sort of activity that is helping develop the youth of Henderson County into caring, considerate and self-sufficient young adults. That's why I love my job (and cleaning the muffin crumbs out of my car).

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