

Talkin' the Talk

It takes a special kind of talent to fearlessly, proudly and distinctly speak in front of an audience and nowhere was that talent more on display than at the 4-H Alberta Annual Provincial Communications competition held at the Reynolds-Alberta Museum on April 9. Thirty of the top senior-aged orators in the province came to talk, present, and showcase why 4-H members are renowned for their speaking abilities.

With the general topic "A Changing World" – given to the 14 public speaking participants 10 days prior to the event - as the foundation of their content, members delivered awe-inspiring and emotional speeches ranging from political reform, to agriculture technologic advances, to refugee crises. But prepared speeches were not all these speakers were asked to do. These premier communicators were required to deliver a two to three minute impromptu on a current event with only one minute preparation time. Limited prep time aside, these 4-Hers rose to the occasion wowing the audience and judges with their ability to get their message across clearly and concisely while under pressure.

Spencer Graling of the St. Paul 4-H Multi Club earned the title of 2016 Public Speaking Champion with his prepared speech "Definition of a Politician." Spencer was presented with the Grant Fletcher Memorial Award and will be 4-H Alberta's representative at the Canadian Youth Speakers for Agriculture competition held in Toronto this November. As well, 2nd place - Isabell Stamm "For All Ages", Crestomere 4-H Multi; 3rd place – Melanie Krupa "The New Reality", Bon Accord 4-H.

"To compete at this level is truly humbling. Every speaker at provincials competes at such a high caliber that it forces you to find your own voice, and make your message better resonate with the audience, in order to set yourself apart from everyone else," states Spencer. "As I begin to explore post-secondary options and ultimately prepare for my future, I am realizing just how significant my communication skills are. Whether it be currently giving a class presentation and running a 4-H meeting, or, in the future, carrying out a university interview, running a company and maybe even trying my hand in a little politics, my ability to communicate my message to my peers is, and always will be, essential."

Presenting an illustrated talk or a demonstration provides its own set of challenges but when 16 top-rated presenters are tasked with engaging their audience for 8-10 minutes the words and actions flow smoothly and effortlessly. In topics ranging from fly fishing, to women in agriculture, to moving away from home, it is easy to see why these members excel in the boardroom or classroom.

Clayton and Cody Dyck of the Two Hills 4-H Beef & Multi Club had the audience in stitches with their entertaining and informative demonstration "The Struggle is Real" on home renovations earning them top 2016 presentations honours. In addition, 2nd place - Logan Holben "One Way Ticket", Golden Prairie 4-H; 3rd place (tie) – Kayla Jones "Finding Common Ground", Crossfield-Madden 4-H Beef and Jayden McDowell "The 87 Percent", Three Rivers 4-H Beef.

