

## ***Love of people, animals inspires 4H leader Volunteer shows youth how to care for livestock***

By Sara Lee Fernandez [Corpus Christi Caller-Times](#)

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John L. Freeman Jr. has combined his love of people and animals to make a difference in taking care of animals.



For the last 10 years, he has been the heart and soul of the Rainbow 4H Club and the backbone of the Nueces County Junior Livestock Show, sponsors said.

"I've just tried to give back," said Freeman, who is district conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "I was involved in 4H and FFA when I was a kid, and people were generous with their time. I'm just trying to give back for what they gave me."

Freeman, 48, has spent countless hours helping children learn the fine art of caring for and showing animals as well as learn leadership.

Bridget Flores, 17, started in 4H when she was 8.

"Whenever we need him, he drops everything to help us with the steers," she said. "He's willing to sacrifice for the kids and community. ... He's taught me to show leadership and not to be afraid. He believed in me and made me believe in myself more."

Freeman has been recognized as part of the 14th annual Caller-Times/KRIS Channel 6 Jefferson Volunteer Awards, which recognize community volunteerism. Nominations are accepted throughout the year, and a community panel selects four honorees each month.

"He really showed me that I do have something to say and it's important," said 16-year-old Breanne Vaughan, who met Freeman when she joined his 4H Club at the age of 8.

"This year I'm on the 4H Council for Nueces County," she said. "We are giving the Friend of 4H award and the first person that popped into my mind was him."

Breanne's mother, Karen Vaughan, said Freeman's dedication to children touches a lot of lives.

"It takes a whole village to raise a child and I think that John is very much of that philosophy," Vaughan said. "He's a very positive role model not only for kids but for adults."

Jonna Jensen, manager of the Nueces County Junior Livestock Show, said Freeman takes on so many things as a board member, volunteer and cattle supervisor that he makes the experience easier for everyone else.

"His help is so often not seen," she said. "He is the depth and breadth of knowledge to the show."

Freeman said he gives his time to others but gets a lot back in return by helping children meet their goals.

"It's very good to help other people and try to help them succeed," Freeman said.

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