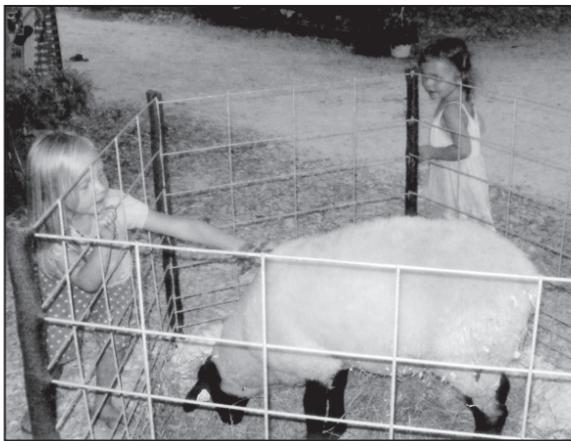


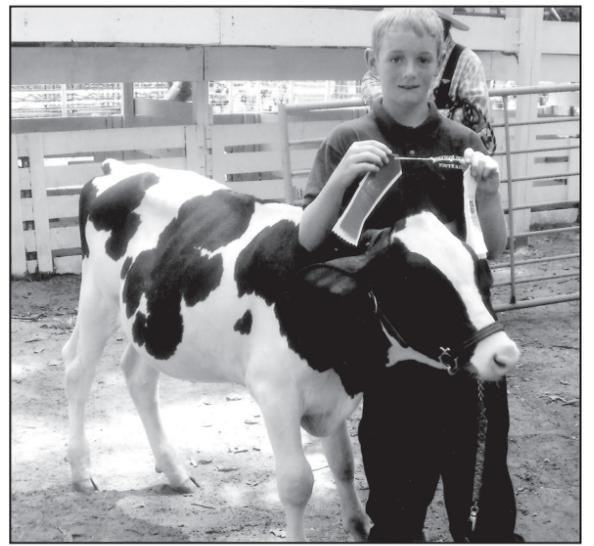
MORE PICTURES FROM THE 4-H YOUTH FAIR



James Brown's 1167 pound market steer took grand champion. James is from the Ravenna Livestock Club.



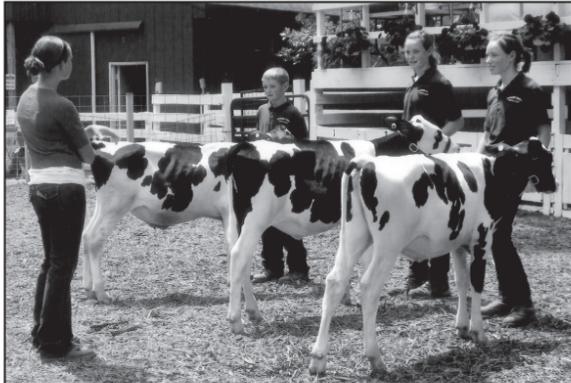
Oliva and Brylee with sheep in the petting zoo.



Hunter Kriger and his bull took first place at the Muskegon County Youth Fair.



Denise Gilbert (right) is pleased with her purchase of Kelly Olthof's banana bread.



Hunter Kriger, Lynn and Kelly Olthof in the show ring with their dairy calves being judged in showmanship.



Gabrielle Dixon, Kelly and Lynn Olthof by the rabbit barn after successfully showing their rabbits.



Brylee Parent enjoyed petting the pigs at the petting zoo.



Jessie pets Lynn Olthof's rabbit in the rabbit barn.



Owen Lynch from the Ravenna Livestock Club showed three market rabbits.

Dog breeding and training for helping the disabled

By Dr. E. Kirsten Peters

We humans go to some trouble so that we can choose which among our domestic animals gets to breed the next generation, thereby over time shaping various lines of animals ranging from types of sheep to varieties of chickens.

Perhaps nowhere is the impact of selective breeding more clear to many of us than with the domestic dog. From ancient breeds like the greyhound and the Dalmatian to more recently derived types like the cocker spaniel, the diversity of dog breeds is tribute to the power that selecting animals gives us to shape descendants of mated pairs. If you didn't know it, you might not think that a Great Dane and a miniature dog that can fit in your purse belong to the same species, but of course they do — it's just that breeding has shaped them over time to radically different sizes.

The science of breeding dogs is serious business, and nowhere more so than with the dogs destined to become service animals. I had the chance recently to learn something of that world from a colleague named Linda Hardesty who, along with her husband Dan, volunteers to home-raise puppies for Canine Companions for Independence (CCI). What Linda and others like her put into the program is impressive, and the results of the work they do are as heartwarming as a wet puppy kiss on the nose.

CCI does the original work of breeding dogs — Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers and Lab-Golden mixes — that form the basic dog-stock for the program. Some behaviors (like being calm in busy places) are traits that CCI and similar institutions can breed for. One particular male dog named "Bobby" in the CCI program has sired literally hundreds of puppies because he — and his descendants — have proven so amenable to the training that all types of service dogs undergo.

Linda is a volunteer puppy-raiser in the CCI program. She takes up where the science of breeding ends and the art of training begins. By working every day with a young pup, including taking the dog to work and on errands, Linda socializes and trains the young animal.

"My mother went deaf as an adult," Linda said. "When I saw what a hearing dog did for her, really transforming her life, I started to think about the possibility of contributing to a program like CCI."

Linda and her husband are now raising Sierra, their tenth puppy in the CCI program.

"She goes where I go, including in the cabin of an airplane or out in public," Linda said.

Sierra came to the Hardesty household when she was about 8 weeks old. She'll stay until she's 18 months. By the time she's ready to leave, she will know 30 commands. She'll also have been trained to not eat food on the floor and to eliminate on command.

"We train by positive reinforcement only," Linda told me.

Sierra is a sleek, all black dog that is a cross of a Golden Retriever and a Labrador.

"If a puppy doesn't make it to being placed with a disabled person, the issue is usually the genetics, not in the environment in which the puppy is raised. Even with very careful breeding like CCI does, the majority of the puppies won't be successfully placed with a disabled person," she said.

Dogs that turn out not to be suited for CCI work are sometimes trained for search and rescue, drug detection, or therapy dog work. Other such dogs are simply placed in good homes — where they become remarkably well-behaved pets.

Sierra wears a vest when she is in training mode for being "on the job." When the vest comes off, she behaves like the normal, high energy Lab-cross that she is.

"I can't predict if Sierra will become successfully placed with a disabled person. But several of our previous puppies have gone on to help people with a variety

of disabilities, and at no cost to them, and that's what keeps us committed to the work," Linda said.

Here's to all those who help create the dogs that go to the disabled. Theirs is a true calling, blending the art of training with the science of breeding, all for the best of reasons.

Dr. E. Kirsten Peters, a native of the rural Northwest, was trained as a geologist at Princeton and Harvard. Planet Rock Doc, a collection of Peters' columns, is available at bookstores or from the publisher at wsupress.wsu.edu or 1-800-354-7360. This column is a service of the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences at Washington State University.



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Carol Hulka
Fruitport Township Clerk

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for your support. I look
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