

Contest Corner

Tractor Competition Serves As Rewarding Learning Experience ㊦

(NAPSA)—Growing up in small town Wallis, TX, where the farmlands flourish and tractors play a key role in everyday life, it seems only right that restoring old tractors would become a passion for local Future Farmers of America (FFA) teens.

Inspired by that passion, two Wallis teens entered the 2005 Chevron Delo Tractor Restoration Competition, making it all the way to the event's finals at the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. The Tractor Restoration Competition rewards the determination, mechanical skill and business savvy of high school-aged FFA members from around the country. Students are required to submit a workbook that details the entire restoration process. The skills learned through the competition help develop the participants into future leaders in the agricultural community.

The teens, members of the Brazos, TX, FFA, share an aptitude for mechanical repair and an interest in vintage tractors, as well as one other thing: Tyler and Jordan Raska are brother and sister.

While the scenario might have turned into a sibling rivalry, the Raskas instead took an alternate approach to their restoration projects. Rather than battling to beat the other, Tyler and Jordan worked on their tractors together, providing support and encouragement along the way. Throughout the long hours spent revamping their tractors and carefully documenting the entire process, the brother-and-sister team bonded amid the grease, paint and rusty tractor parts.

In the end, however, there could only be one winner. Hard

work, dedication and mechanical savvy paid off for 18-year-old Tyler Raska, the individual winner of the Chevron Delo Tractor Restoration Competition.

A senior at Brazos High, Tyler is no stranger to tractor competitions. He has been restoring tractors for four years, and had a particularly successful year in 2005, winning the eight shows he attended with his Grandpa's 1959 John Deere 630, including a national competition and three state competitions.

Tyler, who has a learning disability, has benefited greatly from participating in the tractor competitions. They have helped him focus on his strengths and build confidence, improving his project management and public speaking skills. And each year his knowledge of tractor parts has grown.

"I like to take an old tractor and make it as good as new, if not better than the original," said Tyler. "This year was especially rewarding because I worked in the garage with my Grandpa and restored something that was special to him."

While falling a bit short in her quest for the title, the experience was an immensely positive one for Jordan, the only girl from the Brazos FFA to enter the competition. Tired of being the "go-fer girl" for Tyler as he worked on his tractors, Jordan decided to conquer her own restoration, a John Deere 420.

Jordan, in her first year showing tractors, initially drew inspiration from an unlikely place—the music video for "Save a Horse, Ride a Cowboy," by country group Big and Rich. The music video showcases Gretchen Wilson driving a "cute" tractor and Jordan

decided she wanted to restore one like that.

Working side by side with her brother and her dad, Jordan's knowledge of tractors increased tremendously over the course of the project. She did as much of the work by herself that she could and then consulted the men for explanations and hands-on demonstrations when necessary.

"I highly recommend the Chevron Delo Tractor Restoration Competition to others," Jordan said. "It's an incredible learning experience that helped me develop skills for life. Plus, I've had the opportunity to work alongside my brother, meet new people and make great new friends."

"Chevron sponsors the Delo Tractor Restoration Competition knowing that the skills and lessons learned during the restoration process benefit the teens for life," said Nicole Fujishige, commercial automotive lubricants marketing manager, Chevron Products Company. "We consider it one of our more vital and important sponsorships, one that helps ensure that the industry's future leaders have the tools to succeed."

Currently, both Tyler and Jordan are restoring tractors for the 2006 Chevron Delo Tractor Restoration Competition. They each have their own tractor, plus they're working on one together. With another year of experience under their belts, the teens are looking forward to next year's event—and maybe a different Raska on the winner's podium.

For more information on the 2006 Chevron Delo Tractor Restoration Competition, go to: <http://www.allen-martin.com/tractorform/tractor.htm>.