

MISSOURI NEWS SCENE

4-H clubs celebrate at Cardinals game

By MINDY WARD

It wasn't Emily Sayre's first trip to the mound. At home in Hallsville, the 10-year-old pitches for her little league softball team. But this first pitch would make even a seasoned player nervous.

"I practiced before I got there," she says. "My dad didn't want me to throw like a girl." Like many softball pitchers, Emily throws underhand. "I had to learn to pitch the baseball overhand."

Tightly gripping the ball, Emily wound up and hurled her first pitch. With only one hop, it landed in the glove of St. Louis Cardinal Randy Flores.

Emily took part in this year's 4-H Day with the Cardinals at Busch Stadium on May 13. 4-H families from across Missouri and Illinois gathered in St. Louis to enjoy a game and make others aware of 4-H.

"4-H is a community of young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills," says Rhonda Shafer, 4-H youth specialist for Lincoln County. "Whether a member is from the city or country, there is something for everyone."

The two states organized the event

Key Points

- Missouri youth participate in 4-H Day with the Cardinals.
- The opening ceremony pledge and other events increase 4-H awareness.
- Raffles for the event help generate funds for college scholarships.

in 2002 to celebrate the 4-H Centennial, according to Shafer. It was only to be a one-time event, but it was so well received, it has been made an annual gathering.

Over the past five years, 10,500 4-H members, parents and friends have participated. "The St. Louis Cardinals organization has been very supportive of 4-H Day," Shafer adds. "They have allowed us to do special activities like the parade around the field, batting practice and the visit to the dugout. The opening ceremony with the 4-H pledge and throwing out the first pitch has been very memorable. We appreciate all they have done for us."

Both Missouri and Illinois 4-H foundations use the day to generate funds for college scholarships. By raffling off



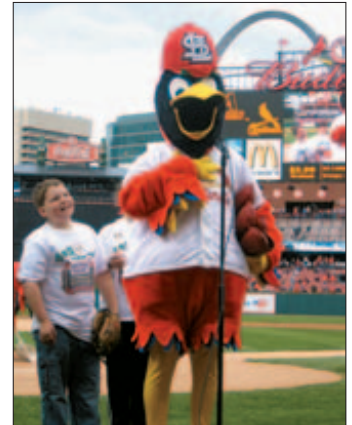
4-H MEMBERS from Monroe County take part in the pregame parade around the infield at the new Busch Stadium in St. Louis.

chances to watch batting practice, say the pledge, or throw out the first pitch, the two states have raised more than \$20,000 in just four years.

A raffle ticket allowed 5-year-old Isaac Pampe to meet his favorite player. Dressed in a Cardinal jersey, Isaac eagerly waited behind home plate during batting practice to get a glimpse of his favorite Cardinal and maybe an autograph.

"David!" he shouted. No sooner did the words leave his mouth and St. Louis Cardinal shortstop David Eckstein walked over and signed his baseball. With ball in hand, Isaac stood staring at a dream come true.

Ward writes from Marthasville.



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