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Windsor High School junior proves she's a real green thumb on the farm

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BRACEWELL - Awakening at 5:30 in the morning to do some chores, spending nine-plus hours at band camp and then running a produce stand can be quite challenging for a high school kid.

There are mornings when Windsor High School junior Lyndsi Podtburg just wants to stay in bed, but she knows that won't do her any good and that mowing the pasture is something that must be done.

"Even though I don't want to get up some mornings, I still have to. You've got to make yourself do it," Lyndsi said. "I had to get up at 5:30 today. I ran home (from band camp), grabbed a glass of water and I came right here. I'm tired, but I think it will all be worth it. It's hot, but you've got to keep going. It's got to get done so you just have to do it."

Lyndsi, 16, began working last spring at the historical Von Trotha-Firestien Farm at Bracewell on the corner of 83rd Avenue and O Street as part of her Supervised Agricultural Experience for her FFA project at the high school. The 50-acre farm was listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior in 2009.

"She started in early spring, and has been out here four days a week," said Lyndsi's mother, Michelle Podtburg.

Lyndsi, a resident of Severance, has been involved with agriculture since birth.

"Her dad (Jeff Podtburg) and I owned a dairy north of Bracewell, so she has actually had ag experience since day one," Michelle said. "The moment she was born we ran feed trucks the next day. She really loves it. This has been a nice fit for her. It's not animals, but it's vegetables. She absolutely loves the outdoors."

Lyndsi is in charge of managing the fresh-from-the-field Bracewell Produce Stand which opened Wednesday, and she is being supervised by her cousin, Judy Firestien, who manages the Von Trotha-Firestien Farm. Back in the mid-1980s, Firestien, 43, remembers growing and selling sweet corn to earn money for tuition at Colorado State University.

"I used to do that in high school and I kind of put myself through college," said Firestien, a 1985 Windsor High School graduate. "So with Lyndsi wanting to do the supervised ag experience, I thought this would be a good project for her. She's done a ton of work. I've been trying to educate her a little bit. We've been talking about pricing, promotions and location, location, location because we think we have a good one here."

Lyndsi, who also is the flute section leader for the Wizards' marching band, wants to go to college at CSU and study to become an ag teacher.

"I wouldn't change it for the world. I love ag and everything about it," Lyndsi said. Lyndsi laid the drip line in the garden, weeded it and planted the whole garden. The sweet corn - peaches and cream, elephant ear and sugar bun - sells for \$4 a dozen.

"I planted tomatoes, cucumbers, cantaloupe, watermelon, pumpkins and peppers," she said.

Lyndsi said the FFA project can be as little or as big as she wanted it to be.

"You have to keep records of how much money you're making, how many hours you're working, what you're doing

with your profits, everything you had to do to get ready," said Lyndsi, who carries at 3.7 gpa at Windsor High School. "I think in October we start putting in our records at school."

Lyndsi said teachers from the University of Northern Colorado were invited to the Bracewell farm to get the historical background on the buildings.

"We dug an irrigation ditch out there, and I was in charge of demonstrating and setting siphon tubes," Lyndsi said. "That was another project that I did. I got a mix of a lot of things out here. Judy taught me a lot about marketing skills and interacting with people. I love coming to work."

TO GO

The Bracewell Produce Stand is located on the corner of 83rd Avenue and O Street, 30951 Weld County Road 27. Hours of operation are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. For more information call (970) 225-2949 or go to www.BracewellProduce.com.

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