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Local 4-H Teen and Cancer Survivor Advances to National Conference with Determination

Despite breaking her ankle just days before the Ulster County Fair this summer, fifteen year old Erica Bell of Accord came to this years fair more determined than ever to bring home awards for all of her hard work and endless dedication. The fair turned out to be a positive and inspiring week for Bell as she took home Reserve Champion Turkey and Senior Poultry Showmanship honors for Ulster County.

In August, Erica made her way upstate to Syracuse for the New York State Fair to test her knowledge of poultry at the annual Avian Bowl competition. The Avian Bowl is a competition for poultry knowledge in which participants from various counties in New York are asked a series of poultry related questions. She placed second overall. This qualified Erica to be a participant in the National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference which takes place at the North American International Livestock Expo in Louisville, KY this November. This national conference allows 4-H'ers from all over the country to compete in educational events that help them learn to make and defend decisions, speak publicly, and gain skills in poultry-related subject matter. State representatives for national contests are selected based on their level of skill and performance at state level competitions, many of which are held annually at Cornell University in Ithaca or at the New York State Fair. In addition to her advancement to this national event, Erica also took home First Place Novice in the Rabbit Decathlon at this years state fair. Among her many other accomplishments in 2008, Bell constructed a complete small scale farm scene and barn of wood for her static exhibit at the Ulster County Fair, which she later donated to the Little Ones Learning Center in Accord.

Erica who has been an active member in Ulster County 4-H for eight years was diagnosed in 2007 with a rare sarcoma cancer and is currently undergoing treatment in Albany. Her true dedication and inner strength continues to inspire all who come in contact with her. Good Luck in Kentucky Erica!

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