

# Stock Options

Ag teacher breeder of champions



## ***Steering students in the right direction***

After winning a national title in college, San Benito High School alum Eddie Garcia returned to his hometown to encourage students to meet their potential. (Staff photo)

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**A**fter the completion of a major project, most people might take a short break. Eddie Garcia is not one of them.

Less than a week had passed since the conclusion of the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, and the San Benito High School agriculture teacher was busy getting ready for the next competition.

"I was already looking for projects for next year here around the Valley... We look everywhere," said Garcia. His dedication to his work and students sends him searching for cattle and other livestock across the state and outside Texas.

"We look hard, and we put miles on our vehicles," he said.

It's been four years since Garcia started making trips as the high school agriculture teacher, but the trips may have been planned years in advance.

At the end of his first agriculture class in high school, Garcia said he knew what he wanted to do with the rest of his life.

"I knew the day I walked into to his class," Garcia recalled, remembering former SBHS ag teacher Shepard D. "Sonny" Brazil.

He said Brazil supported him and kept in contact with him when he enrolled in Texas A&M University. It was in college that Garcia earned national recognition. He was one of 120 students applying to be part of the university livestock judging team. At the end of the year, the top 12 students were chosen for the team and Garcia was one of them. At the team's last competition, they

were crowned national champions.

Garcia said he shares his story with his students to encourage them. As a San Benito native, he wants to show the students San Benito can produce productive members of society who can go on to major universities and win national titles.

It's the chance to encourage students that steered Garcia toward teaching high school agriculture classes.

"This was an avenue to talk to students about animals and agriculture," remarked Garcia. "I always knew I wanted to come back and teach. I had numerous job offers in the agricultural industries, but I knew my job in life would be to teach students and to spread the word about agriculture."

If last week's livestock show is  
**See "Teacher," page 16**



# Teacher

From "Teacher," page 1

any indication of his teaching, Garcia has been very successful.

Students' sale of their projects totaled \$35,100. Both horticulture and livestock projects earned top honors.

His students include the recently-crowned 2005 Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show Cover Girl and the district FFA president and sentinel. Seven of his students have been named Lone Star Farmers, the highest honor for a high school FFA student. During his four-year

tenure, San Benito's FFA has made a name for itself at district level, and Garcia's goal is to earn state-level recognition.

And while he's proud of his work and aspires for more achievement, Garcia continues to draw inspiration from his former teacher.

"We will never fill Sonny Brazil's shoes, though we can sure learn from his traditions and carry on forward," he said.

"He just had a certain persona about him... He knew how to talk to students, more so to give them confidence (and face the challenges," Garcia reflected.

He said students learn responsibility and leadership, as well as developing skills for life, by caring for and raising their living, breathing projects. An added benefit he sees for parents is the knowledge their children are

spending their time positively and productively.

As for his mentor, Garcia looks forward to the completion of the new Shepard D. "Sonny" Brazil Agriculture Science Complex, which is part of the Veterans' Memorial Ninth Grade Academy.

"There are many agricultural facilities in Valley, but this will be the most advanced and be an extension out of class for students to develop leadership skills," said Garcia, who describes incoming freshmen as the heartbeat of the classes, since they're the class's future leaders and recruiters.

Meanwhile, he continues his search for next year's projects.

"Yes, it's a long ways to make a seven hour trip one way, and seven hour trip back, but if we do not find what we want, we come back empty and we go back another weekend if we're allowed," he remarked.

Despite the long trips, Garcia said he takes pleasure in his work.

"I know what... a professional baseball player that makes a lot of money feels like when they just go to a ball park and go throw a baseball around," he said. "I truly don't consider this work in a hard way."