

More time with family. Slower pace schedule. Family meals. Spending time outdoors. What is your COVID-19 positive? I realize that there are many negatives to this pandemic that we are facing, but take a moment to focus on positive changes that have occurred since the stay-at-home order has been implemented.

Life as normal, or at least what we thought was normal, may never look the same, but that may not necessarily be a bad thing. We have been given an opportunity to rethink priorities, focus a little more on families and enjoy a life pace that is just a little slower than before.

In western Kansas, communities come together and support each other in good times and in bad. A popular event that demonstrates that support is our local county fair. The million-dollar question right now is “Are we going to be able to have our fair?” From a 4-H and Extension perspective the answer is “Yes”, BUT your 2020 county fair promises to look different due to our current situation.

Our Twin Creeks Extension District agents are doing everything they can to ensure that our 4-H members will have an opportunity to showcase their projects. Will it be in the same format as previous years? Will we be able to have our family, relatives and friends attend our show and visit our exhibits? Only time will tell, but our number one priority is the safety and health of our 4-H families as well as our communities.

As Extension professionals, we have been tasked to prepare for a ‘normal’ fair, a hybrid fair and a virtual fair. We do need to remember the purpose behind providing a fair event for our 4-H youth. It’s not about the money they might receive from a premium livestock sale, food sale or ribbon premium. And it’s not about the trophies and awards that might be presented.

Our 4-H youth program focuses on hands-on learning by doing in a positive youth development environment with caring adults. It’s the educational component that centers around our 4-H pledge recited at each 4-H club meeting.

I pledge my head to clearer thinking... many hard decisions are being made by youth and parents during this 2020 pandemic. Do I purchase an animal? How can I acquire garments for my clothing buymanship project when shops are closed? If I bake a cake for my fair exhibit, will the judge be able to taste it? Look at the positive... I purchased an animal, learned how to properly care for it and now realize more clearly the toils that farmers and ranchers struggle with on a daily basis. Maybe I can repurpose some of the clothes in my closet to create a new ensemble. Even if the judge can’t taste my cake, I have expanded my cooking skills by making meals for my family.

I pledge my heart to greater loyalty... Regardless of the type of fair that will be held, 4-H members display strong personal values and concern for others. Many members and clubs have continued to show concern for their community and others. Letters have been written and phone calls made to shut ins and family members who are living by themselves. Our Twin Creeks District 4-H members continue to collect the fronts of greeting cards to be sent to the St. Jude’s Ranch for Children. 4-H members are loyal to their communities.

I pledge my hands to larger service... Many community service projects have come to a halt due to COVID restrictions. This has not stopped our 4-H members from planning ahead for the time they can gather together once again to share and volunteer their skills to help others.

I pledge my health to better living... Stay home. Wash your hands. Wear masks for your protection as well as others to prevent the spread of disease. Our 4-H members and families are strong and resilient. In practicing this part of the 4-H pledge, 4-H Clubs and groups are not allowed to meet face-to-face until after July 4th as a directive from K-State Research and

Extension Administration. Clubs have exercised an alternative meeting method through our Zoom platform and ironically, attendance has increased through these virtual meetings.

For my club, my community, my country and my world... This pandemic has affected all four of these elements. We are determined to have a stronger 4-H program after COVID-19 in realizing that meetings, project education and events can be conducted using alternative methods. We hope to grow and increase our capacity in serving audiences that we have not been able to reach.

To Make the Best Better... Our 4-H members are encouraged to do their best and improve the next time, so their “best” becomes “better”. In this manner, members stretch their abilities and capacities to reach their full potential. As a 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent, I am tasked to create opportunities for youth to practice making their best better through programs and opportunities.

Needless to say, we ARE all in this together, and we WILL come out of it stronger than before. Activities and events may not look the same, but the focus has not changed. We are committed to providing a positive, dynamic learning experience for youth.

Take a few minutes and focus on the positive affects the COVID-19 pandemic has created for your family. These changes may become part of your new normal.

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Article Header

“I Pledge...”

“Chasing Clovers”

By Patsy L. Maddy

Twin Creeks Extension District
4-H Youth Development Agent