

4-H is not about awards, projects competitions or money -- 4-H is about helping youth grow and develop as young adults. Youth development goals for the Kansas 4-H program are often referred to as Life Skills.

Building a Positive Self-Concept: Youth feel accepted by others and achieve success in meeting increasingly difficult challenges. 4-H'ers develop healthy behaviors as they successfully provide leadership for others, share their feelings and ideas with others, accomplish goals they set for themselves, and decide for themselves the progress they have made.

Developing an Inquiring Mind: Through mental stimulation, curiosity and enthusiasm for finding out about the world and its people. 4-H'ers develop an inquiring mind through learning experiences such as exploring projects, meeting new friends, developing talks and demonstrations, helping design a club booth, going on field trips, hikes and tours.

Relating to Others: Through expressing ideas and feelings, respecting differences among others, dealing with conflict and applying democratic practices in problem solving. 4-H'ers learn communication skills with club meeting talks and demonstrations; they develop and practice problem solving as they work with others on group projects, exercise leadership and participate in intensive, small-group camp activities.

Developing Concern for the Community: Through awareness of the natural and social communities and their interrelationships, learning to respect difference, and assuming responsibilities to help. 4-H'ers develop concern as they assist younger members, plan and conduct day camps for community children, participate in retirement home visits, and share in community service projects.

Learning to Make Decisions: Through use of knowledge, skills and values in identifying and analyzing problems then selecting from alternative solutions. 4-H members develop and practice decision-making skills as they set goals and determine strategies to work toward goals within their group, participate in well-planned project programs, consider alternatives in project selection, evaluate one's own progress toward goals, and become involved in meaningful club business meetings.

As we approach county fair season in western Kansas, we are reminded that the 4-H youth development program does not focus on the competition element of the county fairs, but the educational aspect that comes from participating in contests and competitions. We all thrive on the rush of a competition and who is crowned the champion. When looking at the path it took to get to the competition, it is the ups and downs, the educational learning opportunities and day to day challenges that ultimately create champions in every participant.

Judging involves opinions. When you exhibit at a fair, you are asking for a second opinion. You have already formed your evaluation or viewpoint about your project work. The judge doesn't always know the problems you had or why you chose to do what you did. Your answers to questions help a judge to better know about your work. Remember to be gracious and respect the judge's opinion. You chose to have them evaluate your exhibit when you entered it at the fair. You might not agree and that's OK.

In our opinion, everyone is a "Winner" -- regardless of the ribbon color. Our goal is to have "Purple Ribbon 4-Her's", not just purple ribbon animals, cakes and dress. Enjoy the fair season in western Kansas!

Article Header

“Just An Opinion”

“Chasing Clovers”

By Patsy L. Maddy

Twin Creeks Extension District
4-H Youth Development Agent