



.....**STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH**

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It seems that I have always been involved with 4-H, and for that matter have for most of my life. Since from about age 8 on I have in some way either was in 4-H, worked with 4-H, had a daughter or grandkids in 4-H and of course the last 15 plus years as a Nebraska Extension Educator I have been intimately involved with 4-H activities on the county, district and state levels. It may be a surprise to some, since I was a long time ag education instructor and FFA Advisor, that I was a 10 year 4-Her and still have my record books, 4-H awards and meeting attendance bars for my 4-H Achievement pin. It was the foundation on which I built my eventual career. It led me to a love of agriculture and a decision to go to a high school with an agriculture program and then on to college to see what direction to go with my life as a career choice.

Actually two people beyond my parents were instrumental in that monumental decision that I made when I graduated from high school. The Franklin County Ag Agent and my high school Vocational Agriculture teacher at good old Wilcox high school both saw something in me and advised that I needed to go beyond the borders of familiarity and spread my wings at UNL. I was always curious and had an insatiable appetite for anything that involved agriculture and I am certain that my involvement in 4-H was the catalyst for that desire. I really wasn't sure what I wanted to major in or what path may be ahead of me but knew it would be some form of agriculture starting with Pre-vet Science. That was until I found out how much chemistry I had to take, and I will be the first to admit that was not my best subject. So I ended up majoring in Ag Education/Ag Economics/Agronomy in the hopes of getting a high paying job in the ag industry, but ended up doing just what my mentors thought that I should do. Now over a 50 years later I have gone full circle and thanking an organization that had such an impact in my own person life. I would like to point out that this is special week for the four leaf clover!

National 4-H Week is October 4-10: 6 million young people across the country are celebrating National 4-H Week, an annual celebration of 4-H during the first full week of October. During this week, 4-H is showing pride in the great things that 4-H offers young people and show our thanks to the incredible 4-H youth in our communities who work each day to make a positive impact on their respective communities. For more than 100 years, 4-H has stood behind the idea that youth is the single strongest catalyst for change. What began as a way to give rural youth new agricultural skills, today has grown into a global organization that teaches a range of life skills. 4-H is dedicated to positive youth development and helping youth step up to the challenges in a complex and changing world. 4-H is dedicated to helping cultivate the next generation of leaders and tackling the nation's top challenges such as the shortage of skilled professionals, maintaining our global competitiveness, encouraging civic involvement, and becoming a healthier society. 4-H is really making the best better!

I find it interesting that the renowned Tufts Institute did research on the positive affect of 4-H and not so surprisingly to me found that the structured learning, encouragement and adult mentoring that young people receive through their participation in 4-H plays a vital role in helping them achieve success in life and actively contribute to their collective communities. The research by Tufts showed that the 4-H experience grows young people who are four times more likely to contribute to their communities; two times more likely to make healthier choices; two times more likely to be civically active; and two times more likely to participate in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs in the out-of-school time. I know the value of youth organizations like 4-H/FFA and can verify the advantages they bring.

4-H, the nation's largest youth development organization, grows confident young people who are empowered for life today and prepared for career tomorrow. 4-H programs empower nearly six million young people across the U.S. through experiences that develop critical life skills. 4-H is the youth development program of our nation's Cooperative Extension System and USDA, and serves every county and parish in the U.S. through a network of 110 public universities and more than 3000 local Extension offices. Globally, 4-H collaborates with independent programs to empower one million youth in 50 countries. In Nebraska, 1 in 3 age-eligible youth across all 93 counties are enrolled in 4-H, for a total enrollment reaching approximately 140,000 youth. Nearly 50,000 youth participated in school enrichment experiences and over 33,000 Nebraska youth were members of a 4-H Club. Nearly 11,000 youth and adults participated in 4-H camping programs and approximately 12,000 volunteers share their time and resources with Nebraska 4-H. I think that is pretty darn impressive.

4-H Grows Here: The mission of Nebraska 4-H is to empower youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnerships with caring adults. Nebraska 4-H strives to help young people achieve their greatest potential by introducing high-quality youth development experiences into the lives of Nebraska youth and families. Engagement in 4-H results in youth who are making positive decisions related to their health and their future goals. Further, they are advocates and leaders determined to leave a lasting impact on Nebraska communities. By taking part in Nebraska 4-H, youth are preparing for a successful future by focusing on 4-H Science, Agricultural Literacy, Career Development and College Readiness, Community Engagement, and Healthy Living. If you wish to learn more about 4-H, I encourage you to go to: www.4-h.org or <http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/webster>. Incidentally, the 2015 National 4-H Week Theme is: 4-H Grows Here! I think that is a very appropriate theme and it is evident in the county that I am lucky enough to live and work in. 4-H does grow and prospers with the support of the communities, parents, businesses and of course our youth! Happy 4-H Week!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or UNL Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, UNL Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email to: dlienemann2@unl.edu or go to the website at: <http://www.webster.unl.edu/home>