

# SPOTLIGHT ON 4-H

Nebraska Extension 4-H Newsletter

June 2020

## Creating the Ideal Volunteer Experience - By Tayler Wickham

Why does an individual volunteer? What keeps them going? Are there ways to maintain their participation? These are all questions that can be answered by turning the tables. This article will share three quick ways to create the ideal volunteer experience by opening the lines of communication and engaging individuals with what appeals to them the most.

### THE VOLUNTEER SHOWCASE

Invite 4-H parents/guardians to an “adults only” night to showcase their volunteer talents. This night will allow for parent-leader relationships to form, which will *hopefully* lead to an increased participation rate. Ask individuals to share their favorite craft, talk about their hobbies, facilitate a game, make an easy snack, or anything that can be duplicated in a 4-H Club meeting.

### COMMUNICATION IS KEY

How well do you know your 4-H parents/guardians? The best way to find out is by engaging in conversations, taking time to listen, and connecting on social media. Today, social media is very mainstream and a good avenue for getting to know someone – but don’t let that prevent you from having face-to-face interactions with the parents/guardians of your 4-H members. Ask them out to coffee, schedule a playdate, or plan a crafting party. If you want to learn more about someone, being intentional with your actions is the best start.

### CLUB BONDING

We all do a wonderful job at making sure youth in 4-H Clubs have ample opportunities to meet, interact and bond, but most times we lack at giving that opportunity to ourselves as adults. Schedule club bonding activities for youth *and* adults! Whether it’s a backyard BBQ or service learning activity, getting everyone together will start conversations that can positively impact a volunteer’s experience.

We can all agree that managing volunteers, parents/guardians, or other adults can be challenging *at times*. But what we can also agree on is the importance of connection. Connecting with volunteers on a personal level allows for a greater understanding of their intentions and creates mutual respect. As a 4-H Leader, you have the power to enhance a volunteer’s experience – just reach out!



## In the Spotlight for June



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

The 4-H Youth Development program abides with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

# Nebraska 4-H Achievement Application

By Kathy Burr

What is the Nebraska 4-H Achievement Application? It is the new way to apply for 4-H state awards such as National 4-H Congress, National 4-H Conference, college scholarships, and some counties are using the system for county 4-H awards. It replaces the 4-H Career Portfolio.

Record keeping is an *important* life skill to learn. A record of your 4-H career helps show your progression of personal growth and life skills learned along with your leadership/community service/volunteer activities. The record system helps tie in the 4-H accomplishments to other activities such as school, community, and church.

The Nebraska 4-H Achievement Application, directions and examples are online at: <https://4h.unl.edu/achievement-application> The application is easy to fill out using Word, Google Doc, or as pdf form. As a 4-Her you get to experience synthesizing information. The application is congruent with the expectations of college admissions, scholarship applications, and future employers (concise, accurate information that is reflective of your qualifications and achievements). In the Career Spark section, you describe how your 4-H experiences have sparked your interest in a future career field.

There are two versions- Junior (ages 8-14) and Senior (ages 15-18), shifting to a consistent age requirement for National 4-H Congress and Conference trips to eliminate confusion and inconsistencies.

## A few HINTS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION:

- Applications must be completed and submitted electronically by the county and/or state deadline.
- Limit responses in the “My Experiences” section to a maximum of 3 pages for ages 8-14 & four pages for ages 15-18, single-spaced, 12-point font. A fifth page is allowed for state applicants.
- In the selection process, significant accomplishments in your **4-H experience, leadership, community involvement, and career spark** are given more consideration than the number of 4-H projects completed.
- Creativity is encouraged, use bulleted lists, photos, infographics, etc. to help tell your 4-H story.
- Record all year long record activities/events/contests on a calendar or special “4-H Activity” notebook so when it’s time to type your 4-H Achievement Award Application, your information is readily available.
- Take lots of action pictures while starting, doing and finishing the 4-H projects/exhibits and while doing contests, events and community service.
- Only one application is required and permitted even if youth are applying for multiple awards and recognition at the state level.
- It should be the 4-Her’s accomplishments/words in the application but can be typed by an adult until the 4-Her is old enough to complete by self.
- Sit down and get a “rough draft” application done before school starts.
- **Celebrate!!!** Have a party or treat after applications are finished each year!

## Resources & Examples

- <https://4h.unl.edu/achievement-application>
  - Senior example: [https://4h.unl.edu/documents/NE4H-Sr-Achievement-Application\\_Example-2.pdf](https://4h.unl.edu/documents/NE4H-Sr-Achievement-Application_Example-2.pdf)
  - Junior example: [https://4h.unl.edu/documents/NE4H-Jr-Achievement-Application\\_Example.pdf](https://4h.unl.edu/documents/NE4H-Jr-Achievement-Application_Example.pdf)



# National Youth Science Day

By Jennifer Swerczek

National Youth Science Day (NYSD) is 4-H's annual initiative to inspire kids everywhere to take an interest in STEM topics (science, technology, engineering and math). NYSD events consist of challenges that provide access and opportunity for kids to learn STEM skills and teach them how to apply these skills to the world around them. NYSD programs are proven to engage youth in fun, hands-on activities and get them excited about careers in science.

NYSD is the world's largest youth-led science experiment. Every year, thousands of youth across the country take part in the event. NYSD events usually occur in the month of October but can also be facilitated all year round. These events take place in classrooms, clubs, homes, and after school spaces across the country. In the fall of 2018, NYSD reached nearly 250,000 kids at thousands of events across all 50 states.

Each year, National 4-H Council offers a new challenge for youth to complete. NYSD events may be hosted locally by county Extension offices, after school programs, school enrichment programs, or even camps. In fact, any educator is welcome to facilitate the NYSD activity with their students. Kits are available for purchase which include all the materials and instructions educators need to facilitate the challenge. Looking at the NYSD challenges over the last few years, there has been a focus on computer science. There is a tremendous need for young people to know how to create technology, not just consume it. This is true across every industry, and that's why 4-H computer science programs help prepare youth for college and career by teaching technical programming skills and essential life skills like problem solving, teamwork and resiliency.

Nebraska 4-H has taken NYSD a step further and offered a virtual event that kids can participate in. For the 2019 NYSD Challenge, *Game Changers*, approximately 10 afterschool sites from across Nebraska, ranging from Chadron to Superior, interacted and completed the NYSD challenge via video conference. With a big state like Nebraska, doing a virtual event can help bring engaging and impactful programs to youth in rural areas.



## A few NYSD Challenges:

2019 - **Game Changers**: uses physical activity and puzzles to teach kids important Computer Science (CS) concepts and problem-solving skills, creating real-world connections between CS and civic engagement, healthy living and agriculture.

2018 - **Code Your World**: includes a computer-based activity on Google's CS First platform and three unplugged activities that bring coding to life through games and interaction.

2017 - **Incredible Wearables**: a fun way for kids to build wearable fitness trackers.

2016 - **Drone Discovery**: a hands-on engineering design challenge that explores the science behind drones and how they are being used to solve real world problems.

2015 - **Motion Commotion**: a two-part experiment that investigates the physical and human factors of motion using toy cars to simulate a speeding car collision and distracted driving.

2014 - **Rockets to the Rescue**: explores the field of aerospace engineering. Youth learn engineering concepts, develop math skills, learn about nutrition and help solve a relevant, global issue.

2013 - **4-H Maps and Apps**: young people become geospatial thinkers as they design and map their ideal park, use GIS mapping to solve community problems and contribute data about their community to the United States Geological Survey (USGS).

2012 - **Eco-Bot Challenge**: youth test the interaction between the Eco-Bot's environmental engineering design features and various control surface configurations to determine the most effective environmental clean-up solution for a simulated toxic spill.

For more information on NYSD and these past challenges, visit <https://4-h.org/parents/national-youth-science-day/#/past-challenges>

# Youth Voice

By Julie Boyle

In 4-H, we believe in the power of youth. We see that every youth has valuable strengths and abilities to improve the world around us. 4-H empowers youth to be true leaders in their club, community, country, and world. A true leader is someone who has confidence, knows how to work well with others, can handle challenges, and sticks with a job until it is done. 4-H is proven to grow true leaders with life skills such as confidence, independence, resilience and compassion. So how can we inspire youth to become true leaders? One way we can inspire our true leaders is through incorporating youth voice into our programs.

Youth Voice refers to the ideas, thoughts, values, knowledge and interactions of youth. We can use youth voice to support young people in taking on leadership roles in a variety of settings. As we include youth voice into our programs we will see youth who are more authentically engaged and activities that are responsive to the lives of youth. Additionally, when youth voice is incorporated both youth and adults benefit as they recognize each other's dreams, actions, outcomes, and reflections. When working to include youth voice in our local 4-H programs we want to make sure we are being genuine and show youth input is truly valued.

To do this we want to provide a safe and supportive environment where...

- Adults believe youth voice is important and a key to success
- Youth and adults are equally invested
- Adults regularly acknowledge youths abilities to influence change
- Youth strengths and abilities are a continuous focus
- Youth are involved in all aspects of activities including learning about the issues, researching, planning, teaching, decision making and evaluation.
- Youth are encouraged to invite their friends or other adults
- Youth feel comfortable asking for clarification
- Youth are seen as functioning members of the community and their input is as valuable as their adult counterparts

Nelson Mandela once said "History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children." Let us be the people to show our youth they matter. Help them to feel they are of value to our society so we can watch them change the world. To learn more about building true leaders and to find more ways to encourage youth voice in your local program, contact your local Extension Office or visit [4h.unl.edu](http://4h.unl.edu).



# Crops Projects Integrated in Club Meetings

By Brandy VanDeWalle

Club leaders have the opportunity to exert a positive influence in the lives of their members. Creating a good club project doesn't have to be difficult or cumbersome. Rather than creating multiple projects throughout the year, consider creating a year-long project. This allows the leader and other adult volunteers to focus on one major project and not create multiple projects throughout the year. A good club project should empower young people to make decisions and be responsible for the outcome of the project. The project should also use a mentoring system for new members and recognize that each member brings their unique strengths to the project.

If members are interested in a project area or want to work as a team in a competitive event, there are numerous opportunities available through Nebraska 4-H. One project related to plant science is the Innovative Youth Corn Challenge which has the potential to incorporate elements of a successful club project. First, find a project mentor or sponsor for the project with knowledge of crop science. Secondly, organize club members to participate in the project throughout the year based on areas of interest. For example, youth with a background in the crop sciences can do the brainstorming and set up the project's challenge plot. Club members who are organized and pay attention to details can be in charge of keeping records. Older members can mentor younger ones. There are many ways this could be set up; it just takes an organizational meeting to determine youth's interests and strengths. This concept can be applied to any project, but if clubs are interested in this project, details can be found at <http://cropwatch.unl.edu/youth> and click on Innovative Youth Corn Challenge.

Of course, there are also several projects that can be entered at the county and state fair as well. This year, some of the agronomy and range projects have a few changes to them. Those who have entered a grain or plant exhibit in the past will notice there is now an online form to accompany the exhibits instead of an essay. This will create consistency in the information that is collected and guide youth through the process. This form will be located on the Nebraska 4-H website, under the state fair book section.

## Need resources to help youth learn about crops?

Check out the [CropWatch.unl.edu/youth](http://CropWatch.unl.edu/youth) website which provides educational resources and activities for leaders or educators to teach youth about crops. If you questions or need additional resources, contact Brandy VanDeWalle at [brandy.vandewalle@unl.edu](mailto:brandy.vandewalle@unl.edu).



# Sewing Project: D-Ring Belt

By Marie Nelson

Sometimes when looking at a sewing machine, it likes to break down on you before you want to get started. But please don't be intimidated by it, it is a tool that kids can create awesome clothing from, sewn projects for Home Environment, Child Development, or sewing something for their animals. By familiarizing yourself and the child with the basics of the sewing machine, you can spark some creativity.

With this simple half-hour project, 4-H youth can create a useful project and gain a few different skills that sewing has to offer. A firm, woven, medium-weight fabric of cotton or cotton blend is best for this project. Encourage them to start with something simple. Belts are practical, and with the right patterned fabric can be made personal. Some D-ring belts can cost you upwards to \$100, but with this project may cost a mere \$2.

Skills attained with this project:

- Use of basic tools
- Use of the sewing machine
- Basic construction techniques
- Selection of fabric for item sewn
- Use of a tape measure
- Basic pressing
- Top stitching
- Application of hardware
- Reading and following directions

To get started you will need:

- Measuring tape
- Fabric Scissors
- Cotton or Cotton Blend Fabric
- 2 – 1.5" metal D-rings
- Sewing Machine
- Thread
- Iron
- Iron Board

Directions:

1. Measure your waistline by wrapping the measure tape around where your belt would sit.
2. Cut the fabric to be the length of your measurement, plus 10". Width will be 6" wide.
3. Fold the fabric in half and press with the iron.
4. Unfold the creased fabric strip and fold one side in to reach the middle crease and press with an iron.



5. Repeat on the other side.



6. Fold the belt on its original crease and press again.



7. Unfold on end of the belt and fold in 1/2" of fabric and press with an iron.



8. Refold the end and press.

9. Top stitch 1/4" from the edge with a sewing machine, around the entire belt starting at the unfinished edge.



10. One the unfinished end, fold over 1/2" of fabric and press.

11. Fold over another 1 1/2" and press.



12. Insert 2 – 1 1/2" metal D-rings.

13. Stitch across twice about a 1/4" apart to secure and enclose the D-rings onto the belt.



# Environmental Leadership Ideas for Your 4-H Club

By Sarah Polacek

Humans do not protect what is unknown or not valued. With that in mind, as 4-H club leaders you have the opportunity and a captive audience to educate 4-H youth to value and understand the usefulness of the environment. This education will foster a behavior change that is required for such acts to be important. Behavior change can refer to a broad range of activities and approaches that focus on the individual, community, and environment. Teaching about simple changes that can be made in one's daily lifestyle is a great start!

Share with your youth that choosing to make small changes, such as shutting the water off when not being used, shutting the lights off when leaving the room, or walking to school one day a week, is the first step in making a difference in environmental sustainability. However, more than one person must make that first step. There are powers in numbers, and youth can make a difference by serving as a leader to teach others simple environmentally-friendly behaviors.

As a 4-H club leader, you know that every child has the potential to be a leader. A leader is someone who takes the first step and sets an example while being a model to others. An environmental leader is someone who steps out in creating awareness, consciousness, and action to reduce harm to Mother Nature so that our Earth can thrive.

With the development of environmental leadership skills, youth can use imagination and creativity to contribute to a common project. Many opportunities in 4-H and a variety of project areas exist to encourage behavior change in environmental leadership. Some examples include volunteering to clean up a local park, organizing a community service-learning project around recycling, creating a flyer to promote recycling resources in your community, job shadowing an environmental specialist, planting a flower garden to beautify the community, or learning about energy cycles.

Use these experiences to generate a 4-H project to share your story. By enrolling in a Citizenship Project, you can share your public adventure through a scrapbook or poster. Another option is to join as a club to complete a 4-H club exhibit depicting what your 4-H club has done in the areas of community service, environmental awareness, and leadership. Or try your green thumb by enrolling in Horticulture. If planting flowers and other plants is up your alley, you can make either a Flower Garden or Garden Promotion Poster.

Youth are powerful influences. Help your 4-H members lead by example and educate others all while making a difference in their communities. The best way to gain knowledge about the environment is by simply caring about the environment.





## **Brand New Teacher Scholars Academy at Nebraska**

**By Carly Horstman**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teacher Scholars Academy is a cohort-based scholarship opportunity for incoming undergraduate education students. Community shapes the experience of the Academy by fostering an inclusive environment for students with a shared interest of education. The goal of the Academy is to expose future educators to Nebraska's changing demographics and communities through experiential learning opportunities. The Scholars live together on the same floor in one of UNL's residence halls, take shared classes together, complete service hours, and engage in research.

Scholars choose to major in one of twenty-three teacher education majors offered at UNL ranging from elementary education to agricultural education. Many teacher education professors engage with the Scholars during their course of study and create mentorship pathways for long-term success. Additionally, the Scholars have access to full-time professional staff to assist in navigating college coursework, finances, etc. If you enjoy engaging with the communities around you through education and empowerment, the Academy may be a perfect fit for you!

The Teacher Scholars Academy is currently open for applicants to the Fall 2020 cohort. Interested students must be an incoming education student who plans to study in a teacher education major. Applicants apply to UNL and will then be able to access the Teacher Scholars Academy application link on their MyRed account. The application consists of an essay, personal video, and resume. For more information on this program, please contact Ben Bannon at 402-472-0695.

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