



Views from VanDeWalle

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Helping Others

One of the things I love about rural communities is the amount of help and support given when people go through difficult times. I can attest to that, on several occasions. For example, when my mom had her stroke in 2011, neighbors, coworkers and friends stepped up to provide support, send cards and helped out when I was needing to make trips to visit her. Also in 2011, 2012 and 2014, I was laid up with ankle surgery and very blessed that many people in the community helped watch my girls, made meals for our family and showed many other acts of kindness. A quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of my favorite, “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

Recently, I’d like to give special recognition to County 4-H Councils, 4-H superintendents, FFA advisors and county fair board/ag societies for the numerous hours spent working to allow youth to showcase their projects. I have been so amazed at the creativity, dedication and time spent to help us as Extension staff find ways youth can be celebrated. While county fairs will look different and there won’t be the opportunity to socialize as normal, I am so excited that youth will be able to compete and continue learning life skills.

A part of the 4-H pledge is to “pledge one’s hands to larger service” and “heart to greater loyalty”. These are the values we try to instill in our 4-H youth. It is great to see youth helping each other during 4-H workshops and programs and friendships being made. There is actually research that shows how helping others has benefits for themselves. A professor, Thomas G. Plante from Santa Clara University and adjunct clinical professor of psychiatry at Stanford University has found that his students who attend a spring break trip working with people in poor and marginalized areas managed stress better than those who did not attend trips. He believes the research finding is due to a matter of perspective. Additionally, when helping others, you generally experience more empathy, compassion and solidarity with others as well.

As we approach county fair season, it is important to remind adults, as well as youth of 4-H’s core values of helping others with our hands. It might improve their stress management abilities and make for a smoother fair for all involved. Rather than seeking out problems, remember the 4-H pledge and help others. You’ll likely be happier and create a better experience for everyone around you. So, instead of only worrying about your exhibits or animals or trying to get others in trouble, consider helping a fellow exhibitor and fill one’s bucket with water or calling that person and telling them their animal is running low on water. If an exhibitor is struggling to know where to check-in their static exhibit, offer to help them.

By practicing these small acts of kindness, you might be surprised how much less stressed you and those around you will be. I am certainly appreciative of a 4-H parent who helped my daughter last year by putting her calf in after it somehow got out of its pen. “I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country and my world.” If we practice these principles, we can make a positive difference in the lives of others.



County Fair Update

Due to restrictions currently in place by COVID-19, many county fairs are looking at options for how to showcase 4-H'ers and judge 4-H exhibits and contests. We are working closely with the Ag Society/County Fair Board, local Health Departments, and 4-H Councils to make decisions that will best meet local needs while complying with state/regional/local guidelines and policies.

We are operating under:

- The Nebraska Department of Agriculture's *Guidance for Restricted Fair Openings in Nebraska to Slow the Spread of COVID-19* which can be found at: <https://nda.nebraska.gov/COVID-19/fairopenings.pdf>,
- the Nebraska Department of Agriculture's *Guidance for Livestock Shows and Events in Nebraska to Slow the Spread of COVID-19* which can be found at: <https://nda.nebraska.gov/COVID-19/livestockshows.pdf>, as well as
- the current Directed Health Measures that are applicable for that county: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/COVID-19-Directed-Health-Measures.aspx>

While each county will look different based on local needs and restrictions, 4-H will offer ways for youth to celebrate their accomplishments and showcase the work they've been doing throughout the year.

Shows are for only *immediate family* members/guardians of that exhibitor in attendance at the shows. All livestock shows will be available for online viewing to the best of our abilities. Please be respectful of our youth and realize this face-to-face option will only happen with community support and being respectful of our youth and following of public health department guidelines.

While extension staff, councils and fair boards have the events mostly narrowed down, there are a few more details being worked out and the schedules will be released soon. We ask for your continued patience as we continue striving to get things right and make this a positive experience for our 4-H and FFA youth. When final details are solidified, you can find the events that will be streamlined to the best of our ability on each county extension's website or social media. Locally, go to fillmore.unl.edu or clay.unl.edu.