

## Tennessee 4-H, The Great Comeback

### 2020-2021 4-H Congress Essay

**Tennessee 4-H: The Great Comeback** is the theme for 4-H Congress and many of our county events for 4-H this year. But what does that really mean? We can't talk about the "great comeback" until we look at 2020 and all that happened during the COVID pandemic. People were having to work from home, some got laid off, students had to learn to do school virtually- so before we look at comeback let's explore how 4-H was a place to call home first. To some, home is the people you live with, to some it's the structure you live in, and to some it's only a dream. In my humble opinion, home is an enjoyable, happy place where you can live, laugh, and learn. A place to build memories and future wealth. A place to truly just be yourself. However, home goes beyond the four walls you live in every day. The places you go, the people you meet, and the things you learn can truly become a place to call home.

4-H meets all these criteria. As members, we are afforded the opportunity to travel to various counties, cities, and states. We meet individuals from different backgrounds and ethnicities [eth-ni-cities]. And we learn skills, such as public speaking, that are invaluable to us as young adults and beyond.

As I referenced before, home goes beyond the four walls you live in every day. 4-H opens the door for us to not only wake up, but thrive, in a new and exciting environment again and again. For example, there are an unlimited number of camps, conferences, and competitions, both in state and out. They are available to any 4-H members willing to put forth the effort to meet the specified criteria. For example, I recently attended the All-Star Conference, where I had to complete an application outlining my community and leadership responsibilities, as well as, why I deemed myself worthy of an All-Star. In order to fulfill these leadership responsibilities, I was required to attend camps and mentor younger 4-H members. I have three younger sisters at home, so this was not only a much needed break, but also, second nature to me! Competition is also an integral [in-te-gral] part of not only my 4-H journey, but is also an unavoidable, sometimes uncomfortable part of 4-H. However, aren't there things in your home life or mine that are unavoidable? I'm thinking the dreaded cleaning of your room, hours of high school homework, and curfews that you think shouldn't exist. However, just like the 4-H criteria we are expected to meet, these things mold us into the young adults we strive to be.

4-H also offers the opportunity to create meaningful and lasting relationships, such as those we have in our own homes. When you think of your family, certain people and what they mean to you come to mind. For example, your parents. The people that provide encouragement, support, and access to opportunities to better ourselves.

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