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Tennessee 4-H: Shaping the Future Together

I still remember the day in 4th-grade when we were offered the opportunity to give a 4-H speech. Of course, originally, I didn't want anything to do with public speaking, but after a bit of encouragement from my parents, I decided to give it a try. My unorganized speech on perseverance lasted about 30 seconds as I stood at the front of the classroom in my oversized shirt and worn-out jeans. Clearly, I did not move on in the competition. Flash forward to the present, a well-dressed, confident girl gives a speech to a room of competitors and judges. She speaks with meaning as she goes over the different ways to be courageous. It's astonishing to realize that girl is me. How does someone go from a shy little girl to a speech finalist for the central region? The answer is simple. 4-H. This organization has taught me things that other activities never could. Because of my upbringing in 4-H, I have gained excellent communication and record-keeping skills, along with a passion for hands-on learning.

My many years in 4-H have shaped my future through communication. The reasons I give in livestock judging has helped me with debate projects in school and interviews for scholarships. In communications and marketing, we give speeches on important topics that we are passionate about. This has helped me with my confidence and has expanded my diction choice from researching different topics. In the livestock project, we have an EXPO Sale every August. To get buyers, I have gone around to different companies and spoken to many CEOs about promoting 4-H through attending the EXPO. This has helped me gain excellent marketing skills.

4-H has also helped me master record keeping. Each year, I submit a portfolio of all of the work that I have done this year. Because of this, I keep accurate records of all of my experiences per year in 4-H. This also has helped me schedule better for events so I can refer to them for my portfolio. I also have kept up with cattle records in my herd through the livestock project.

Most of all, 4-H has increased my passion for hands-on learning. The hands-on activities in 4-H have increased my passion for getting the job done and have increased my work ethic. This paves a way for success in my future as I join the workforce in agriculture and allows me to teach the future generation through hands-on activities, just as 4-H has taught me.

4-H shapes more than just my future. It shapes those around me as well. Because of 4-H, my future is brightened and stronger, and I can connect with the next generations in similar ways that 4-H has connected with me. I am beyond grateful for the opportunities that continue to shape my future each day. Without them, I would not be the person I am today.