

Tennessee 4-H: Shaping the Future Together

4-H is a “tried and true” organization that has stood the test of time— bringing generations together through similar stories, equipping youth to lead and serve (both in our homes and around the world), and helping us all to realize that the virtues that we esteem as a nation are to be sought after in our own lives through daily personal choices and in our goals. 4-H has helped positively shape generations in the past; we now look ahead and ask the question: How will Tennessee 4-H shape our future?

We live in a world that may offer knowledge, but without skills and wisdom, where does that knowledge take us? Our schools generate students who can take tests and regurgitate answers. Families often live over-extended schedules that leave very little time to model valuable life skills. Our lives today can sometimes have us “going through the motions” instead of pondering better ways to explore, experience, and learn. This is where 4-H steps in and makes the difference.

In 4-H, leaders come alongside the next generation and challenge them—not necessarily on what to think, but how to think. I’ve gleaned invaluable information on planning a garden while also learning skills in planning a meal for family and friends. As a small child, I remember my grandmother quilting and never fathomed that many years later, I would sit beside other women who were teaching me to create my own quilt. In my time as a 4-H member, I have been challenged to explore the world around me in nature, service to my community, and in making wise choices.

As I grow as a student and person, I will take with me the skills I’ve learned through 4-H. I imagine one day being a mother who prepares and plans meals in my home. I think about the need for responsible community leaders and how 4-H has helped me gain a heart for service—where will I serve one day? Our nation is void of people who can freely, kindly, and confidently

speaking to issues and stand before others. Through 4-H, I've grown in public speaking skills. The list of how I have benefitted through 4-H is endless.

What does learning all of these skills and more mean to me? I remember the old adage, "To whom much has been given, much is to be expected." The future is bright with 4-H; yet, we must "hold the ropes," meaning that I not only need to move forward in 4-H, but be prepared to give back to the next generation one day. The skills and experiences that have helped cultivate me today will reap a harvest over my lifetime. So, while 4-H is shaping me now, this timeless club is shaping the future. And, with all that I have received, it will be my honor to give back.