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Why Are Fairs So Important To 4-H?

County fairs are the most recognizable element of the local 4-H program. According to Michigan State University Extension, fair is a culmination of many weeks, months or even a year's worth of learning, creating and discovering through 4-H experiences. For years there have been many different opinions about the purpose of county fairs in regard to the 4-H program.

It may not be the fair itself that is so important to the program, but the entire package. When a youth raises an animal, for example, whether it is for market or for show, they have to care for, work with and learn about that animal. The opportunity to show it at the fair is the driving force that motivates them to get up early, go out and work with their animal, to watch a DVD on how to show the animal, to go to club meetings and so forth. The youth may take good care of their animal because they are a caring person, but most people wouldn't deny that the youth put in that extra effort knowing they are going to show it at the fair.

This can also be true for non-animal projects. Youth may love to take pictures, but the idea of bringing those photos to the fair to be judged may encourage them to learn more. Through lessons with a project leader or a conversation with a photography judge, youth may learn how to use proper light, crop a photo, find the focal point within the photo and much more.

Now the question is, are these things important to youth development? Is it important we teach youth how to raise an animal and show it? Is it important to teach them how to take good photographs if that isn't going to be their career? While these are nice bonuses to our program, most staff would argue they are not the goal of the program. They are, however, hooks we use to get to the real purpose of teaching life skills.

Through 4-H projects, youth may learn leadership as they take on roles within their club such as club officer or chair of a committee. They may learn empathy or understanding as they learn about others' challenges or about youth from another part of the community. Youth learn teamwork and character building as they work together with their club toward common goals.

Youth who raise animals may learn self-discipline and responsibility as they take care of a living thing that depends on them every day for their welfare. During the judging process, a youth may have to explain their project to a judge, which helps to develop their social and interview skills. During times of disappointment or excitement, they will learn things such as good sportsmanship, managing their feelings or being concerned for others.



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Many times the youth don't even realize all the great things they have learned until they reflect back on their experience in 4-H when they are older. Many will admit that their 4-H experiences helped them to develop their leadership skills and become more well-rounded citizens that are able to see the bigger picture.

Certainly everything one does in life teaches life skills, which in turn help people to develop and mature as citizens within a community. Through 4-H, however, volunteers and staff can help youth to develop more of these skills earlier in life, assist them to be successful, to be able to face challenges head-on and to persevere. So the next time you have the opportunity to visit a county fair, take it and be sure to look at all the 4-H projects. When you see the innovative, creative and outright impressive projects, think of how much more they actually mean and the path the youth has traveled to get the project finished.

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](http://MichiganStateUniversityExtension.org).

4-H Projects & Events

4-H KIDS IN THE GARDEN



Have fun learning gardening basics, with hands-on activities! We'll meet the 2nd Wednesday in June.

June 6th: 4:00pm to 5:00pm at CCE Building in Norwich

Contact Erica for more information: elc97@cornell.edu

Introduction to Shooting Sports



Chenango County 4-H Shooting Sports will run a five week introduction to archery and air rifle. This program, taught by our trained instructors, is designed for youth new to shooting sports and will concentrate on safety and technique.

We will have two 1.5 hour long sessions of air rifle on May 31, June 7, and three 1.5 hour long sessions of archery on , 14*, 21, 28 beginning at 6:00pm.

For ages 9 and up. Most be enrolled 4-H members.

Contact Richard to sign up: rlt229@cornell.edu or 607-334-5841
ex1115

**Unregistered/Unowned
Livestock Forms Due--June 1**

**Enrollment Forms Due--June
1**

**4-H Kids In The Garden--
June 6**

Swine CNY Rodeo--June 10

Bug Club--June 16

Pullorium Testing--June 22

**Junior Livestock Show On-
line Registration Due-- June 23**

**Junior Livestock Show-- July 9-
11**

**Leaders Meeting and 4-H Fami-
ly Pre-Fair Picnic--July 12**

**County Fair Campsite Registra-
tion--July 14**

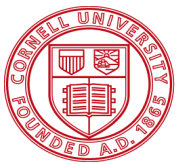
Fair Clean Up-- July 24

State Fair Entries Due--Aug 1

**Case Building Judging--
August 5 & 7**

**Chenango County Fair--
August 9-13**





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Thanks for catching up with the
Chenango County 4-H Program.
Hope to see you soon!



Richard Turrell
4-H Educator

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

4-H Photo Finish



**Ambitious Lions
Community Service
at
Galena Park**

We're on the web: www.cce.cornell.edu/chenango or become a Friend on Facebook!