

## **I Dare You...to Help Youth Find Their Leadership Styles**

By Kathleen Jablonski, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development

Developing leadership skills - that's what most youth serving organizations' ultimate goal is...to develop the leaders of tomorrow. Working with kids can be a lot of fun, sometimes frustrating, and in the long run, rewarding, especially if you are nurturing their abilities to hone their decision making and leadership skills.

One of the best parts of my job is to encourage leaders and adults I work with to see the potential in the youth in their lives. The kids can be quiet, boisterous, reserved, annoying, fretful, worrisome, polite, respectful, fun, angry, sad, or any other of a myriad of adjectives you can assign to behavior. Yet, they all have potential...potential to set goals, find a cause and provide leadership to improve their community.



Research on youth development cites one of the eight essential elements of positive youth development as an “opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future.” This includes leadership development.

We start small in 4-H: Youth members are elected to be officers of a club. In a well run club, the youth work with the leaders as guides on the side to determine the club's goals, project areas and community-service learning projects. The kids take the lead and carry out the program...with the adults working along side them or in the background.

It is one reason Grafton County's 4-H Youth Development Program, part of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, is pleased to award an I Dare You Award each year. Through this award, we offer an opportunity for a 4-H member to participate in the National Youth Foundation's Leadership Institute.

The American Youth Foundation's National Leadership Award is a unique opportunity to honor extraordinary young people for their character and leadership. The award recognizes youth ages 15-18 years old who strive to be their personal best and make a positive difference in their schools, youth groups, 4-H clubs, and communities. It goes along with our essential element of positive youth development: opportunity.

To quote the National 4-H Council: “Young people need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose. They need opportunities to connect to their communities and learn how to give back to others. As part of this process, youth gain an understanding of others' needs and learn how to respond to these needs. Generosity may also include the development of values such as compassion and tolerance for diversity and the ability to take the perspective of others, and to approach problems as "a member of a global society," through participation in local, and national politics.”

That's why I'm proud to announce Jacob Dalton of Bath, New Hampshire, as our 2010 I Dare You Award recipient.

The award qualifies Jacob to attend the American Youth Foundation's leadership camp in the summer of 2011. Jacob is a member of the Littleton Raccoons 4-H Club, the River Valley Shepherds 4-H Club, and the Grafton County 4-H Teen Club. Throughout his year's in 4-H, he has served as a club officer, been active in county wide activities, and has been a youth member delegate to Eastern State Exposition and

State Activities Day. He is home schooled. In addition to 4-H, Jacob is a first degree black belt in karate, participates in sports at Woodsville High School and is completing White Mountain Community College and Great Bay College classes through an online program. Jacob is the son of Amy Gall of Bath and Mike Dalton of Stamford, Vermont. Jacob will receive a stipend from the Grafton County 4-H Leaders' Association to assist him in attending the American Youth Foundation's Leadership Camp.

My congratulations go to Jacob Dalton. The 4-H leader who submitted the nomination stated:

“Jacob has shown a history of persistence within his academic and extracurricular activities. He is motivated to excel in his self-directed classical education. Jacob has interesting ideas and big plans for initiating his own community service conservation projects....”

So, in the spirit of the 4-H motto: “To Make the Best Better”, we send Jacob to the Leadership Camp next summer knowing that he will return to Grafton County 4-H with new leadership skills training which will serve him well in his current and future endeavors.

All programs sponsored by UNHCE are consistent with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding age, color, handicap, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. For more information about starting a 4-H group in your community, contact Kathy Jablonski at [Kathleen.jablonski@unh.edu](mailto:Kathleen.jablonski@unh.edu) or call: 603-787-6944.