

Acknowledging Achievement

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

Throughout my nine years as Extension Educator, I've had the privilege of working with a number of youth who work hard, play hard and learn new skills. It's been fun to watch the kids start in the program, work with their leaders, accomplish their goals, and get the recognition they deserve...and need...to become competent, caring, resilient adults.

Recognition is one facet of mastery and is an essential element of Positive Youth Development (the research the 4-H program uses to create a caring and supportive learning environment for youth by their leaders/mentors).

4-H youth earn recognition at every level of the program. Cloverbuds, ages 5-7, earn participation ribbons for all the experiential work they do. While doing the Cloverbud program, they learn the basic skills needed to enter the 4-H program and do project work. At the end of each activity, a Cloverbud receives recognition - a ribbon, certificate or finished project - as a tangible reminder of their efforts.

When youth turn 8 and move into 4-H projects, they can work on their project page and enter in one of the countywide events. The project page serves as a record of their goals and progress in the project. As the year progresses, youth can include their project page in their County Records, a portfolio of their 4-H experiences. At 11, a 4-H member can apply for a County Project Medal, using their County Record as the basis for their entry. As a teen, the County Record is useful in many real life applications, as it contains the information needed for job applications, college applications and the 4-H State and National Award applications.

As youth progress through the 4-H year, they can enter in several county, regional and/or statewide events to earn recognition for their knowledge and skills. In Grafton County, youth can enter in the Food Show, Public Speaking Contest, Textile Event and County Activities Day programs earning ribbons and prizes based on a competitive judging scale. Each youth that enters earns a ribbon based on the Danish system of judging. If they meet the standard set for the competition, they earn either a blue, red or white ribbon. Projects that they have made can be entered in a local fair for further recognition. (In Grafton County, it is North Haverhill Fair.)

Youth who excel in County Activities Day, Public Speaking and Textile Event who are 12 years old and over, can vie for spots at State 4-H Activities Day and, in turn, earn a spot to represent the state 4-H program at Eastern States Exposition's New England Building.

Events like Dairy Quiz Bowl and Horse Quiz Bowl, Hippology and Horse Judging, allow youth to compete for spots on a county team. That team practices together and attends a state wide event where they may qualify for a national competition.

And then there are the animal shows...club level, county level, state qualifying shows and then Eastern States, or in the case of working steers, the Tiller's competition. Each species has a series of events and clinics where youth can learn new skills, be asked to teach other youth skills they have acquired and present their animal science project work and the knowledge they've gained to a judge or panel.

As the 4-H year begins October 1, watch your local newspapers and community calendars and check out our website at <http://extension.unh.edu>. You'll find a variety of notices and articles about our 4-H members and their projects. Thanks for helping to congratulate our 4-H'ers by giving them the recognition they deserve for a job well done.

For more information about 4-H in Grafton County, call the UNHCE office at 787-6944 or email: Kathleen.Jablonski@unh.edu.

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