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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM CELEBRATES 4-H WEEK, NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

Uniontown, PA – Head. Heart. Hands. Health. Those words relate to the core values that give 4-H its name. Members strive to learn and grow in their thinking, be loyal in their hearts, use their hands for service, and be healthy to live better lives.

Communities across Pennsylvania celebrated the state’s 4-H Week March 14-18, with the Fayette County chapter receiving a proclamation from County Commissioners Dave Lohr, Vince Vicites and Scott Dunn.

“It is a positive youth development program,” Penn State Extension 4-H educator Jennifer Deichert said. “We work with kids in various different project areas and various different modes.”

Deichert said the most common way kids interact in 4-H is through clubs.

“A lot of them are centered around a certain project type,” she said.

For instance, there are 4-H dog clubs where kids learn about breeds, agility, and other canine-related topics. Other 4-H members may be in clubs focused on robotics, cooking and sewing, shooting sports, or creative arts such as jewelry-making or leather-working.

“There is a common misconception with 4-H that you have to be a farmer and it’s all agricultural,” Deichert said. “We’re trying to teach kids skills like goal-setting and team-building.”

Deichert said 4-H’s approach is based on the THRIVE model, a framework that takes into account the well-being and mental health of children, youth and families.

“It’s pretty heavy in public speaking, so we try to teach them speaking and demonstration skills,” Deichert said.

4-H members also learn about government and parliamentary procedure, and they do community service projects as well.

One such project is One Warm Coat. Deichert said 4-H members in Fayette County collected more than 220 coats to be distributed for free to those in need of warm clothing via organizations like Fayette County Community Action Agency and the Caring Closet at Connellsville Area Middle School. She said the Catholic churches in Uniontown also accepted donations for their clothing center.

“We also have a new club in Fayette County - the Fayette 4-H Good Citizens Club,” Deichert said. “One of the things we’re working on is what it means to be a part of a community.”

To that end, club members enjoy visits from police officers, firefighters, and other key members of the community, who share information about their roles in society.

Deichert said Fayette County's 4-H members recently were introduced to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, 17 goals which are a call for action in global partnership.

"We talked about what the kids are passionate about that they can work on within the community," she said, noting 4-H members are making posters related to the project for display at the Fayette County Fair this summer.

And although 4-H is not all about agriculture, members do learn about that, too.

4-H Week also coincided this year with Agriculture Literacy Week," Deichert said.

In addition, National Agriculture Day was March 22. So, Deichert reached out to local schools and visited classrooms to provide a little bit of agricultural education. She said 32 classrooms in kindergarten through sixth grade received a 4-H packet.

"We gave them a book, and there were some resources with activities for them to do through the week to learn more about agriculture," Deichert said. "Some of our members also read books to classes, both in person and virtually."

Deichert said there are some exciting events on the horizon for Fayette County 4-H.

"The robotics club is doing a workshop on the EV3 robot," she said, explaining that members will teach students in three middle schools a little about coding.

A competition day will be held May 21, during which participants will be given challenges that they must program their robots to complete.

"We also offer camps. We always do a summer day camp, and the regional and state levels offer overnight camps," Deichert said.

She said members also can look forward to leadership conferences and a visit to Harrisburg for Capital Day.

Deichert said 4-H always is looking for members of the community who would like to share information about their careers, talents or interests with its members.

"4-H is a great, positive way for kids to get involved," she said. "It helps them be successful members of their communities."

To learn more about Fayette County 4-H, visit the Facebook page, connect online at <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/4-h/counties/fayette>, or contact Deichert by phone at 724-438-0111 or by email at jld61@psu.edu.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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