***Belonging***

When I officially joined 4-H was 13 years ago, but for me it has really been much longer. I have always had 4-H in my life and with my mom being a 4-H leader for twenty plus years I’m sure you could probably see why. Being in 4-H I’ve gotten to know lots of people, see them grow and develop much like myself into the people we are today. The club I have been in has always been relatively small with anywhere from five to fifteen members attending even though in the past it was much larger. No longer one of the young eager-faced juniors I am a senior who greatly enjoys working with the younger members in the club to learn or experience something new. I myself remember the days when I was putting together my first demonstration *A Horse of a Different Color* and working with my first pony Dimples. Seeing the younger members today doing the same things I also think of the older kids who helped me learn in the past when I needed it and so I love to offer myself in the same way to these kids. Part of being able to belong is not only by making lifelong friends but lifelong connections with mentors and peers as well as family members. I seek to be that lifelong support for many of my friends and the youth I work with and to make sure that if they ever need help I am always there.

***Independence***

While belonging is an essential element of 4-H so is each member’s independence from each other. We all make decisions for ourselves and by doing so we learn that some decisions can have life changing consequences. Decisions to do drugs or drop out of school can impact lives negatively but the decision to join 4-H and get involved can only make your life better. I’ve learned that 4-H gives you the skills, knowledge, and personal values to be successful. Without 4-H I would never have done as well in school as I have and wouldn’t have gone to near as many places like Denver, Colorado to compete at the Western Horse Classic or Atlanta, Georgia as a delegate for the 88th National 4-H Congress. By being successful I’ve found that I can not only depend on myself to do make things better but that others can depend on me as well.

***Generosity***

4-H has given me many opportunities to help those in my community and around the country better their lives through community service projects, acts of citizenship, and valuing other people’s opinions. I continue to contribute every day, giving my hands to better service to give our world a better tomorrow. When I first think of generosity I think about food drives or donations. To me however generosity can be teaching a life lesson to another member that I have learned and they have yet to face. It can be giving someone the tools to get the work done that without your help they could never have done alone. The greatest thing to me about 4-H is that it is run by volunteers. Volunteering your time to help youth have a place to belong, to learn and grow, to find their independence is most generous thing a person can do. I would be proud to continue to do what many others have done since the start of 4-H by becoming a leader of a club myself.

***Mastery***

I have always strived to master everything I learn though sometimes it does not always want to be easily mastered. Talents and lack thereof get in the way as in general life and time running short. Horse has always been my main project and I continue each year to master the subject in as many ways as I can. My focus has been mainly on the equine educational events that interest me with not only how they are run but the fact that I can find a way to judge how much I have improved over the years. 4-H has shown me that it is important to be knowledgeable about something so that you may have the confidence to go out and seek greater challenges. Learning as much as I can about horses has always been important to me because someday I would like to have an equine career either teaching about horses in a school or possibly working in the equine medical field. By being able to master hippology and demonstration contests I feel competent enough to one day be a teacher and a 4-H club leader.