** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/2021/10/4h-new-year-appreciation-volunteers.html

Released: Oct. 5, 2021

4-H looks forward to new year, expresses appreciation to volunteers

Anyone with a passion or spark is encouraged to share with youth, say 4-H officials

By Taylor Jamison, K-State Research and Extension news writer

MANHATTAN, Kan. — After a difficult year of 4-H volunteers not being able to connect with youth as they normally would, northeast area 4-H specialist Diane Mack and Chisholm Trail District 4-H youth development agent Jill Martinson said they are thankful to those who volunteered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We really appreciate their creativity, dedication and perseverance,” Mack said.

“They are such an amazing group of people who really make a difference in kids’ lives,” Martinson added. “Especially after a year where they haven't been able to connect with youth the way they normally would.”

Martinson remembers the lukewarm response both volunteers and kids had to the idea of more Zoom meetings. Volunteers worked to keep kids involved and engaged even in an online setting.

“Leaders were dropping things off on porches the day of the meeting so that the kids would have snacks and activities they could do together when they were on Zoom,” Martinson said. “So, when they connected virtually, they had kind of a physical way of doing that.”

For those interested in becoming a 4-H volunteer, Martinson said the opportunity is open to anyone, especially those passionate about a certain interest.

“A lot of our volunteers started with something that sparked their interest, especially when they were a youth,” Martinson said. “They are able to take that spark and spread that to kids to help them also develop a passion for something that could potentially lead to careers or skills to help them (in life).”
She said 4-H offers resources to those who may not be an expert in a certain subject area. The resources are available online or through the Kansas 4-H program, including the recently formed Club Corner or Clover Classroom projects, which are available online.

In looking forward to a new 4-H year, Martinson is especially eager to support the 4-H club meeting environment with youth and volunteers.

“We know through the research that’s been done on the 4-H program that the club experience is where kids really gain the strongest impact in making a difference in how they develop and see the world around them,” she said.

For more information related to volunteering for 4-H, contact your local extension office.

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Source:
Jill Martinson
785-263-2001
martinso@ksu.edu

Story by:
Taylor Jamison
mtjamison@ksu.edu