**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/2022/07/4h-projects-encourage-similar-skills-and-goals.html**

Released: July 5, 2022

A tale of two 4-H projects

4-H youth solve problems, gain valuable skills through differing project areas

*By Annika Wiebers, K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. – They come from the same southcentral Kansas town, but one look at their 4-H interests, and you’d think Katrina Turner and Eric Sprecker had little in common.

Turner raises lambs and plans to major in animal science at Kansas State University this fall while competing on the meat and wool judging teams.

Sprecker builds and programs robots and plans to major in chemical engineering.

The friends from Derby have been Kansas 4-H members for more than 10 years. The differences in their daily routines are apparent.

“My day starts at about 5:30 a.m. to walk the lambs, feed them, clean out pens, give them fresh water and do other chores,” Turner said. “In the evening, I work for a couple hours cleaning, feeding, exercising, practicing, showing and building a relationship of trust between myself and the lambs.”

A typical day for Sprecker “is a lot of trial and error to get the robot to work. Often it will work once but then not work a second time. I’ve had to be very patient with trying very slight changes over and over until it finally works. And sometimes it turns out that instead I need to change something else to solve the problem which has also taught me to not linger on what didn’t work and try something else.”

Despite their unique challenges, Turner and Sprecker note that the learning outcomes and skills gained are quite similar.

“The beauty of 4-H is it does teach from that hands-on, failure-is-key mindset,” Turner said. “I feel we have both learned soft skills from our project areas. We have learned how to present ourselves to a judge, how to publicly speak on our project area, and most importantly how to gracefully fail.”

Sprecker adds: “Our projects -- and really all projects -- are in one way or another about problem solving. For every project you have a goal and when trying to achieve that goal you run into problems that you have to solve. So while the kinds of problems we face are very different, the same concept is there of figuring out how to solve those problems and move on to the next one. And through this problem solving we have learned that failure is not final unless you let it be.”
Kansas 4-H offers nearly three dozen project areas with the goal of attracting youth of many backgrounds.

“I think it’s important that 4-H can appeal to so many different interests because it not only gets a wide variety of people involved but it also allows people to explore multiple interests,” Sprecker said. “I’ve met many 4-Hers who both show livestock and are involved in other projects like robotics. This interconnection between project areas allows 4-H to feel like one big organization that has opportunities for a wide variety of interests rather than a bunch of project areas that just happen to be part of the same organization.”

“When I first started 4-H,” Turner said, “I was not part of the agriculture side at all. In fact I did not become interested and involved in that aspect until I was in high school.”

“4-H has allowed me to learn so many different skills and explore so many different interests until I truly did find my passion in agriculture. It is interesting because you don’t find another youth organization that has such an array and so many opportunities.”

Turner added she believes it is important for youth to explore and fail in order to grow.

“I know 4-H sometimes feels like it is for the rural communities only, or it is divided by all of the different interest areas, but really the different project areas allow for youth to dive into what interests them for the common goal of developing youth with the skills they need to be successful adults,” she said.

More information on Kansas 4-H is available online, or from local extension offices in Kansas.

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Kansas 4-H youth development, www.kansas4-h.org

K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Story by:
Annika Wiebers
annikaw@ksu.edu

For more information:
Katrina Turner
katturner6804@gmail.com

Eric Sprecker
eds54664@gmail.com