** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/2022/04/4h-national-volunteer-week.html

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**Kansas 4-H: Volunteers are ‘lifeblood’ of program**

Youth organization honors those who give their time, effort

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Shane Potter is one who gives credit where credit is due. And when it comes to volunteers in the Kansas 4-H program, he’s big on the kudos.

“Volunteers,” he says, “are really the lifeblood of how we run 4-H.”

In 2021, the Kansas 4-H program reported that more than 8,400 Kansans volunteered time to help nearly 50,000 youth. Volunteers support the hundreds of extension agents and state specialists that conduct 4-H programs across the state.

Potter is a 4-H Youth Development specialist, located in the state’s office in Manhattan, and from his perspective, the time given by Kansans is critical for youth.

“It’s the volunteers that bring life and connect with youth on a daily and weekly basis,” he said. “We are so appreciative of the contributions and structure that volunteers provide to make our system successful.”

Kansas 4-H is celebrating National Volunteer Week, April 16-23. The state’s largest youth organization has been around for more than 100 years, and offers nearly three dozen project areas and numerous programs that rely on caring adults to work closely with youth.

“There’s a place for everyone,” Potter said. “Regardless of how knowledgeable or confident a person is in an area, there is a place that can embrace your skills, help you contribute and allow you to give back to your community.”

Potter said Kansas 4-H offers a formal process for becoming a volunteer, which includes a background check and training. He said those interested in becoming more involved should contact their local extension office.
Others, he said, may spend less time focused on specific areas or needs in the program. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to ask those volunteers to become involved.

“We’ve done studies of why people volunteer and why people don’t,” Potter said. “And one of the things they say is that they weren’t asked. We help our staff understand that if you see someone that has a passion for an area that’s part of your community, it’s okay to ask them directly to volunteer.”

Potter said that although Kansas 4-H plans a week to show its appreciation for volunteers, he realize that many who give their time aren’t looking for recognition.

“But,” he said, “it’s always a nice thing to show we do appreciate what they’ve done, and the things that volunteers are contributing to youth.”

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Kansas 4-H Youth Development, https://www.kansas4-h.org

Kansas 4-H Volunteer Screening Resources, https://www.kansas4-h.org/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/index.html

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

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