Kansas 4-Hers prep for new year, eyeing projects

Projects encourage youth to find their ‘spark,’ says state official

*K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Just weeks removed from the Kansas State Fair, there may seem to be a lull in 4-H activities for many Kansas youth. Actually, the fun is just beginning.

Amy Sollock, a Kansas 4-H youth development specialist in the southwest region, said a new 4-H year kicked off in October and youth have some important decisions to make regarding which projects they will pursue over the next 12 months.

“We’ve got more than 30 project areas, so there’s something for everybody,” Sollock said. “Some kids naturally gravitate toward things they’re already interested in. Or sometimes they’ll pick… something they’ve never heard of, but it sounds exciting. And sometimes people pick things because a friend had a good time in it, or they know somebody who knows a lot about that and they want to learn with someone.”

Animal sciences, baking, creative arts, photography, livestock…Sollock said information on all of the projects available to Kansas 4-Hers is available online. State 4-H officials have even published a Project Selection Guide, and each project area has its own web page to give in-depth details on the types of activities – and commitment – that is required.

“Every family needs to have that honest conversation with themselves at the beginning of the 4-H year,” Sollock said. “How much time do you have to give? How dedicated are you going to be? What’s your budget look like? Some projects – like caring for livestock – have more expense associated with them.”

Other projects, she added, have very little expense involved, but still come with a given amount of time and energy that needs to be given throughout the coming year.
“This is something that we take seriously,” Sollock said. “When you enroll in a project at the beginning of the 4-H year, it’s a year-long experience – not just something to do in July at the county fair. You will learn about, talk about, read about the project all year long.”

Youth are encouraged to select more than one project area for the year, Sollock said.

How many, she adds, is up to the family and the amount of time they can dedicate over the next 12 months.

“We talk a lot about finding your spark in 4-H, and exploring interests and different things that look exciting to kids,” Sollock said. “Project work is an excellent way for them to find their spark. And who knows: It may lead to a potential career down the road.”

Registration for the new Kansas 4-H year is now available online. Interested persons can also get more information about 4-H at their local extension office.

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