

4-H Member Shares Hidden Lessons Learned

by 4-H Member Justine Schulerud, with Kelly Ann Radzik, Extension Educator

Throughout the years in 4-H, I like many other members, have learned many different things that will help me in the future, have had many different experiences, and reached many different goals.

During the different years of 4-H, there always seems to be a new lesson learned--from as simple as how to clip a topline, to life lessons, like responsibility. But I believe that some of the most important lessons that I have learned are the ones that are hidden inside of different situations we all face during our 4-H careers. It is up to us to determine how we are going to handle it, and what we are going to get out of it. For example, if you had a bad year and didn't do as well as you planned, you could either look at it in a negative way, or you could look at it in a positive way and say that you will just have to work harder next year.

There are many other things I have learned through 4-H including: responsibility, time management, respect, what hard work is, and how to earn what you want.

During my 4-H achievements I have used many of the things that I have learned to achieve my goals. Before I start any project, I plan to set goals that I want to reach so I have something to work for. Throughout the years, my goals have varied from just being able to get up early enough to milk my cow, to being able to become master showperson of the fair. When I plan to make a goal I think of the past goals I have achieved, to make realistic goals that I know I will be able to achieve with hard work. So each year, I build upon my goals from the past year to make my fair experience better. For example, last year I won the master showperson [contest], so this year my goal was to help someone who was going to be in the same competition, learn how to show the different animals, and I did. This year, I reached many of my set goals.

There were many different challenges and obstacles that I had to face over the year, but the most difficult for me was time management. This summer soccer tryouts started and I ended up making Varsity Soccer--which was great--until there were conflicts. Throughout the summer, I had worked really hard with my different [4-H] projects and really wanted to have another enjoyable fair. So between double [soccer] sessions I would go and work with my animals. Then when fair came I decided that I would have to miss a couple of practices, which my coach didn't like. But I had to do what I wanted and what I worked for all summer!

The rest of the story, Extension Educator Kelly Ann Radzik reports, is that Justine balanced her time well at the fair, earning multiple blue ribbons for excellence in her projects and even squeezed in some time to help educate the public during Dairy Day. The life skills she discussed in her essay--time management, decision making, and personal responsibility--were key to her positive experience.