The 4-H Youth Development program recognized its 100th anniversary with celebrations on national, state and county levels. Lancaster County 4-H was no exception and planned centennial-related activities throughout 2002.

Lancaster County 4-Hers participated in the Feb. 5 Unicameral Day and the Nebraska Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century. Gov. Mike Johanns addressed the 4-H’ers and proclaimed 2002 “4-H Centennial Year in Nebraska.”

On Feb. 5, a “4-H Centennial Celebration” was held in conjunction with 4-H Achievement Night. City of Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely attended and proclaimed Feb. 3-9 “4-H Centennial Week.”

Projects, photographs and scrapbooks from more than 20 4-H alumni were on display. Throughout the evening, different generations of 4-H’ers shared their 4-H experiences.

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City of Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely attended and proclaimed 2002 “4-H Centennial Year in Nebraska.”

4-H is University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension’s youth development program and emphasizes learning by doing. Organized clubs are the foundation of 4-H, but it also has activities and camps open to all youth, 4-H and non-4-H. Over the years, 4-H has expanded its outreach through numerous School Enrichment programs. In the past year, 4-H reached 25,957 youth in Lancaster County (49 percent of the eligible youth).

4-H has more than 150 project areas available, including: bicycles, chess, child development, clothing, computers, electricity, entomology, flowers/gardening, foods, home environment, horses, household pets, livestock (beef, dairy, swine, sheep, goats, llamas), photography, rocketry, small engines and woodworking. In addition to teaching practical skills, 4-H develops life skills such as thinking critically, solving problems, respecting self and communicating. For these reasons, many home schools in Lancaster County form their own 4-H clubs in order to take advantage of 4-H’s extensive resources.

Youth enjoy 4-H because they choose which projects they participate in and receive personalized attention from their leaders and parents while working on projects. These adult/child mentor relationships are crucial to the positive learning experiences youth gain in 4-H. Youth also have fun in 4-H and develop new friends.

Dusty Ehrlch of the Ropes & Riggin club says, “What I like about 4-H is that you meet a lot of friendly people. I also really like to ride horses. When we first got Lightning, my horse, he didn’t know very much and wasn’t too tame. I had to work hard and have patience with him.”

In 2002, Lancaster County had 110 active 4-H clubs.

Youth interested in joining 4-H can contact Tracy Kuhl at 441-7180 or visit the Web site at lancaster.unl.edu/4H.

4-H Council Provides Behind-the-Scenes Support

Lancaster County 4-H Council is responsible for determining long- and short-term goals and policy for Lancaster County 4-H. Composed of 15 elected members, including 10 adults and five youth, 4-H Council represents the interests of youth, parents and leaders.

4-H Council also raises funds by staffing food booths at the Lancaster County Fair. These funds help support 4-H programs and activities. Last year, 4-H Council sponsored year-round centennial activities, including 4-H Centennial Theme night at Lincoln Saltdogs (see left). Members of 4-H Council are also quite active setting up, organizing and overseeing events at the Lancaster County Fair. Last year, members volunteered more than 500 hours for the fair.

“4-H teaches practical and character skills which youth will use throughout their lives.”
—Deb Arends, 4-H Council member and Lancaster County Extension Board member