Youth “Learning by Doing”

4-H Offers Many Opportunities for Personal Growth

4-H offers youth a variety of activities and opportunities which help teach youth decision-making skills and build self-confidence. The largest event of the 4-H year is the Lancaster County Fair (see story below). However, there are events throughout the year, such as the annual Speech Contest, Music Contest and Demonstration Contest. Karen Clinch says “Speech is a great experience for me. I used to be very quiet and shy, but now I’m able to go out in public and speak.”

4-H livestock exhibitors have several opportunities to participate in activities across the state, including progress shows, the District Horse Show, State Fair, and the Ak-Sar-Ben 4-H Livestock Exposition. Non-4-H youth can participate in 4-H Clover College, the 4-H Lock-In and Nebraska 4-H summer camps. Clover College is a four-day series of workshops held each June. Last year saw 278 registrations — more than double the previous year’s.

Nuturing Leadership

Lancaster County 4-H also offers a variety of leadership possibilities. 4-H Council (see article opposite page) includes youth members. 4-H Teen Council helps with many 4-H activities such as Speech Contest and Fair Fun Day. They also plan, organize and lead a fifth and sixth grade overnight Lock-In. Teen Council member Ian Beck-Johnson says “I feel that this has taught me how to become successful when it comes to helping people.”

Last year, more than $5,100 in 4-H scholarships was given to graduating seniors. Jamie Rutt, recipient of $600 in 4-H scholarships, says the money helped a lot in helping pay tuition for her first semester in college.

County Fair Showcases Talents

The County Fair marks the end of the activity year for 4-H members, who work the rest of the year on projects, many of which are exhibited. Winners at the county level go on to State Fair.

In addition to the usual 4-H/FFA activities which span all five days of the fair, the 2002 Lancaster County Fair had many new activities. 4-H Teen Council members did free face painting and gave temporary tattoos. A 4-H/FFA Pretti-Cow contest garnered much attention. This was also the first year in which Theater Arts, Leather Craftsmanship and Barn Again projects could be exhibited.

At the 2002 Lancaster County Fair, 4,708 exhibits were showcased by 611 4-H members.

Citizen Washington Focus (CWF) Teaches Government and History

Citizen Washington Focus (CWF) is a citizenship and leadership program for high school youth which provides a look behind the scenes at our nation’s capital. In Lancaster County, CWF organizes a trip to Washington D.C. every three years, raising money for the trip during the off years.

In June 2002, 32 teens and five sponsors traveled by bus on an ambitious 15-day itinerary. Stops along the way included historical sites such as the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Mount Vernon and Monticello.

The group spent five days at the National 4-H Conference Center near Washington, D.C. with delegations from other states. There the 4-H’ers held mock congressional sessions and learned how bills become law. Tours of the capital included the Capitol building, the Smithsonian, the Holocaust Museum, Arlington Cemetery and all of the memorials. The group had the opportunity to visit with all five of Nebraska’s Congressmen and Senators and share ideas. One participant said, “This is a great trip to help teens to improve their leadership and communication skills and knowledge of how our government works.”

4-H School Enrichment Programs Feature Hands-On Learning Activities

School Enrichment programs have been a part of Nebraska’s 4-H program since 1974. These programs include teacher guides, videos, books, posters, experiments, games and more. Extension staff develop the programs, train teachers on their use and go into the classrooms for hands-on activities with students.

UNL Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County educates 17,988 youth in 58 schools with the following School Enrichment programs:

- **Garbology**
  Garbology is a curriculum and kit with hands-on activities which introduces second graders to solid waste management and the three R’s: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. This unit is a core (required) subject in the science curriculum at Lincoln Public Schools (LPS).

- **Vermicomposting**
  Second graders learn a new way to compost in Vermicomposting. About 1,000 red wigglers were added to kitchen scraps a week. Their castings can then be added to potting or garden soil for richer plantings.

- **Embryology**
  Through incubating and hatching baby chicks in the classroom, third graders study life cycles. A core subject in the science program of the Lincoln Public Schools, Embryology meets the National and Nebraska Learning Standards of Excellence.

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- **Character Counts!**
  In Nebraska, the Character Counts! character education program was initiated and coordinated by Cooperative Extension/4-H. From a pilot site in Lincoln at Belmont Elementary School, the program now reaches the majority of schools in Lancaster County.

- **4-H Water Riches**
  With an emphasis on quantity and quality, 4-H Water Riches looks at the complexities of one of our most precious resources — water.

- **Blue Sky Below My Feet**
  Blue Sky Below My Feet links space technology to the everyday interests of fourth grade students. Youth learn about gravity, taste space food and communicate with NASA via the Internet.

- **4-H Teen Council**
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