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Kansas 4-H Club Days help youth build communication skills

Annual event also boosts college, career readiness

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Admit it: the thought of speaking in front of an audience makes your palms sweaty, maybe even your knees buckle.

Beth Hinshaw, a [Kansas 4-H](#) youth development specialist, knows that the nerves do not necessarily go away as we get older, but speaking in public does get easier.

“Honestly, it is all about learning how to organize information and deliver it,” she said. “Young people may have a lot of it written out the first time they give a presentation, but as they grow in that skill, they will get to where they are using an outline.”

Beginning in February and throughout March, youth are honing their public speaking skills across the state during Kansas 4-H Days. Hinshaw said the annual events challenge youth to talk about or demonstrate a 4-H project they are working on in front of a judge, who then provides feedback.

“In 4-H, we think of these skills as necessary for college and career,” Hinshaw said. “Youth learn to organize thoughts in a logical manner; find information and research a subject; express ideas clearly and convincingly; prepare visuals to support the presentation; and accept feedback.”

[Local extension units](#) host Kansas 4-H Days for youth ages 7 to 18. “If you have friends or family who are doing presentations, there’s a good possibility that there is a video somewhere that they could share with you,” Hinshaw said.

Most talks are given individually, though a few are demonstrations by teams of youth. Some youth also give illustrated talks, while others give talks that persuade, inform, entertain or inspire, according to Hinshaw.

“A lot of people will tell us they would not have had the communication skills and abilities (later in life) that they have if not for their 4-H background,” Hinshaw said.

“Ultimately, the goal in any presentation experience is for members to complete the presentation with a good feeling about themselves and what they have accomplished and learned.”

Communication is one of [more than 40 project areas](#) offered by the Kansas 4-H program. More information about the state’s largest youth organization also is available at its [website](#).

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations/>

Kansas 4-H, <https://www.kansas4-h.org>

4-H projects, <https://www.kansas4-h.org/projects/>

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More information:

Beth Hinshaw
620-496-8206
bhinshaw@ksu.edu