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NATIONAL 4-H WEEK

During the week of October 5-11, 2014, 4-H youth all across the country are celebrating National 4-H week. One of the elements in celebrating National 4-H Week is promoting the local programs and teaching the public what 4-H stands for. Probably the most often asked question that I receive is what does the H's stand for? Well, today I will tell you.

“I pledge my **HEAD** to clearer thinking”

Young people today have numerous career options to choose from, many more than their grandparents or parent did. But today's youth also must be better prepared. Advances in technology have mandated the need for specific skills in the workforce. The future will belong to those who can think clearly and are prepared to meet the challenge of a changing society and workforce. Programs in 4-H prepare young people to think clearly.

Camps and conferences provide young people with hands-on learning experiences in fun, interactive settings. Judging contests evaluate a young competitor's knowledge, speaking skills and decision-making abilities. The world is changing rapidly, but 4-H'ers will be ready to meet the challenge. They have been preparing their heads for clearer thinking to enable them to succeed.

“I pledge my **HEART** to greater loyalty”

Pledging your heart to greater loyalty requires commitment, faithfulness, understanding, and caring. These are the building blocks of a productive, rewarding life. They are also at the center of 4-H programs and activities. In 4-H, young people learn the value of helping others. They learn to become concerned, productive citizens by understanding the history and character of their communities and donating their time to community service projects. They learn to nurture relationships - both human and animal - based on trust, responsibility, respect and understanding. They discover the importance of cooperating with others, sharing experiences, appreciating diversity and setting goals.

“I pledge my **HANDS** to greater service”

Learning how to serve goes right to the heart of valuable life lessons. Whether it's teaching younger children to care for the environment, creating a wildlife habitat for the community, restoring and beautifying a city park that has succumbed to neglect, caring for a prized animal or packing food baskets for a local food bank, 4-H'ers hands are involved in doing.

By pledging their hands to greater service, 4-H members learn marketable skills, responsibility, commitment, teamwork and leadership. They experience the satisfaction of a job well done, the self-esteem that comes from knowing they made a difference, the flush of pride in reviewing a finished project and the warm feeling of camaraderie that comes from working as a team. These are positive experiences and lessons for life.

“I pledge my **HEALTH** to better living”

It is difficult growing up today. The health issues young people face goes well beyond geographic or social boundaries. Drug and alcohol use/abuse, poor nutrition and teen pregnancy are among the major health issues. Young people are also struggling with problems involving stress, gangs, violence, and managing money. 4-H health programs take a pro-active approach to these issues and focus on prevention education rather than treatment and intervention.

Cooperative programs teach teens how to make healthy choices about eating and exercising, and offer “real life” simulation, one-on-one coaching, large and small group meetings with guest speakers and health fairs that focus on teen wellness. In addition to these programs, 4-H provides teens with opportunities to become effective peer leaders, mentors and positive role models.

If you are interested in the Rains County 4-H program, please give us a call at (903) 473-4580.