

# My 4-H Story

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“Today is your day, you’re off to great places, you’re off and away.” Today is MY day, and through the 4-H program I have had many experiences that have taught me important skills. Those skills have helped me to grow into the person I am, are helping as a teenager today and will continue to help me through my life as I grow into an adult. I am Katelyn Olson, an enthusiastic 16 year old ready to take on the world. 4-H has changed my life and has sent me far. So... “You have brains in your head and feet in your shoes, you can steer yourself wherever you choose. You’re on your own and you know what you know. You’re the guy who’ll decide where you want to go.”

“If you keep your eyes open enough, oh, the stuff you will learn! The most wonderful stuff.” Through the 4-H program, I have had multiple opportunities to take many projects and learn many different skills.

Sewing has grown to be one of my greatest strengths. Throughout my eight years in 4-H, my love for sewing has increased. I see so many benefits in this skill. Through sewing, I am able to sew my own clothes, mend my clothes and sew for others. From sewing I have also gained patience, perseverance and a way of relaxation. This year, I was able to make lots of different projects and I had a blast making them. I also was able to enroll in the Fashion Design Class at Mayfield High School, so I am now able to sew everyday in class. I absolutely love it and I plan to keep sewing as often as possible.

Because I have sewn for so many years, it has brought me many leadership experiences. I began as a junior leader for sewing in my third year of 4-H. Being a junior leader has been very rewarding. I have had the privilege to work with many wonderful 4-Hers of many different ages and it has helped me to improve my teaching and sewing skills. I have had to develop a never-ending patience and a true love for what I am doing. I love being able to work with each 4-Her individually. Being able to run the Fashion Revue for County and District Contests and teaching the modeling workshop was a highlight of my year. I love being able to get on stage and work hard with the 4-Hers, while encouraging them to just have fun. During our practice, I strive to

work hard and teach the girls to model and to stand tall while still having a blast. In the end they all came out with big smiles on their faces and full of a new-found confidence.

This year, I was able to teach an amazing group of seamstresses and we came out to be extremely successful. We also became very close as friends. We planned many workshops to prepare us for competition, but the more we sewed together, the more projects the girls wanted to do. We decided to have extra “parties” for the girls so that they could sew more together in between competitions. We had a pillow party with all our second and third year seamstresses, where we made patchwork pillows. We had a corn bag party, too, for our first and second year seamstresses. I was also able to organize a service project with the girls where we made fleece tie blankets to donate to the Linus Service Project. At each of these parties, we all sewed together, ate lots of snacks and watched movies. They were a ton of fun and all the girls learned a lot at all of them.

“Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.” Something else 4-H has taught me, is just to be myself. When I was a young novice 4-Her, I remember watching the older 4-Hers teach workshops, win awards and most of all, have a whole lot of fun in 4-H. I wanted to be just like them. During my years as a junior 4-Her, I still looked at them the same way, but I couldn’t figure how I could ever be like that. I was just too insecure and there was no way they were going to get me to be outgoing enough to do what they were doing. Now I am one of those senior 4-Hers. I am the one teaching workshops, I am the one having fun. I have found that I can be myself, and by being myself I can do anything.

This year I had the opportunity to participate in the public speaking project. This was my third year competing in this project and it is something I have absolutely LOVED! I was able to work with an amazing teacher this year, Mrs. Davidson. She taught me so much this year in writing, preparing, memorizing and presenting my speeches. I worked with her often and she was amazingly supportive all the way through. I worked with her often, at her house, my house and even over the phone. I wrote a speech on the dangers of teen dieting while incorporating the heart-breaking story of a young teenage girl named Jenny and her struggles. I was so excited with the outcome of my speech and we were determined to have an awesome performance. Sure enough, our hard work paid off. I won first place and the scholarship at State 4-H Conference this year. I was so excited and I am anxious to do more public speaking as I continue in 4-H.

Another project that I took this year and really enjoyed was Ceramics. At the beginning of the year, I had absolutely no experience in Ceramics beyond the point of play dough. I was going into this project blindly. Through this project I had the wonderful opportunity to work at the Branigan Cultural Center in the pottery studio. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience. We were able to experiment with different clays, different types of pottery and we even got to work on the wheel. I really had a good time on the wheel. I surprisingly found it easier than hand molding each of my pieces of pottery that I made. I also loved being able to detail and glaze our projects. I was very meticulous about etching tiny designs into a bowl, or colorfully painting each bowl. I had a wonderful time doing all of this and I am anxious to do more.

“So be sure when you step, step with care and tact and remember that life’s a great balancing act. Just never forget to be dexterous and deft and never mix up your right foot with your left.” I am a confident, hard working and courteous young lady, but without the 4-H program, I would not be so lucky. 4-H has given me a stronger sense of confidence. 4-H has an amazing way of making you invincible. 4-H has taught me to stand up straight, hold my head up high, with shoulders back and be proud of who I am.

4-H has helped me to become more aware of my community and has helped me to become more involved in improving it. Just before Christmas last year I was able to work with The Salvation Army to prepare gifts for needy children around the community. I started out on my own, filling out cards with the children’s names and what they were hoping to receive for Christmas. I greatly enjoyed filling out cards for each child and was eager to do more. That was when I decided that I wanted to have a Christmas Service Party. I gathered a group of sixteen of my friends from school, church and 4-H to help me. We all met at the Salvation Army and we assisted the Salvation Army Volunteers in sorting through and wrapping Christmas presents for the children. As we worked, we were able to watch the children receive the presents that we had wrapped. We worked for four hours at the Salvation Army and then went to my house for dinner and games. The party was a success and my friends are eager for another. Because of 4-H, I was able to search out this service project and organize a group and activity to accomplish what needed to be done while still having fun.

“You’ll be on your way up! You’ll be seeing great sights! You’ll join the high fliers who soar to high heights. You won’t lag behind because you’ll have the speed, you’ll pass the whole gang and you’ll soon take the lead. Wherever you fly, you’ll be best of the best. Wherever you go you

will top all the rest. With banner flip-flapping once more you'll ride high! Ready because you're that kind of guy!" 4-H has greatly influenced my life in many different areas. Because 4-H has helped me develop a hard work ethic and communication skills, my school work has greatly benefited. 4-H has influenced many of my goals also. Because of 4-H, I now hope to major in something including Home Economics; primarily sewing. Who knows, I may find myself ten years from now as a County Extension Agent. I'm still not sure what I want to do with my life, but 4-H definitely has influenced me and will continue to influence many of my decisions.

"Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple." For me the question was what was going to make me happy, help me grow and teach me skills and habits that will help me the rest of my life; the answer was 4-H. It has given me skills that will help me in my everyday life, given me the confidence I need to go on and conquer the world, has taught me to be myself, has taught me the importance of community service and has taught me what is important in my life for my future. "And you will succeed, Yes! You will (98 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  percent guaranteed) Kid; you'll move mountains!"

Note: Quotations taken from Dr. Seuss.