



SUMMIT COUNTY 4-H
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TEACH KIDS THAT PARTICIPATION MEANS SUCCESS!

Summit County 4-H Exhibit Days, the County Fair and other competitive events are only part of the total 4-H experience, yet many people make the mistake of thinking of the events as the only part of 4-H. Too much emphasis is placed on the blue ribbon.

We all want our kids to excel. But when you think about it, is the blue ribbon really going to make a difference in the child's life? Will his or her admission to college or future employment depend on whether he or she received a blue ribbon? Of course not. What colleges and employers are likely to consider are the kinds of activities the applicants participated in and learned from.

Participation itself is a form of success! Young people need recognition for just being involved. There are so many destructive and negative activities in which young people can become involved. We need to encourage kids to participate in wholesome, character-building activities such as 4-H. If we only value the relatively few winners in a contest or at a fair, we are devaluing the non-winners who may have worked even harder and learned even more from their experiences.

Parents and 4-H'ers need to evaluate their 4-H experiences by what was learned, not by what he or she won. Members should make a mental or written list of what they learned, both in project knowledge and in personal skills. The 4-H record books are the best place for members to record what they hope to learn and to evaluate what they did actually learn over the course of the year. Personal growth is more important than any ribbon or award!

When preparing for competitive events this year, remind your members that the only people they should compete with are themselves. Each child should strive to improve his or her own performances. Help members set goals such as "I want my cake decorating to be smooth", rather than the destructive goals of "I want to win", or "I want to beat so-and-so".

Remember, every time we enter a competition, we are asking for the judge's opinion. There is no guarantee that we will like or even agree with that opinion, but **RESPECT** his/her opinion. If everyone thought alike, there would be no reason to have a competition.

Finally, remember that members view competition differently than adults. They compete for fun and excitement, and for a chance to be with their friends. Our goal is to help members feel good about their experiences, regardless of the color ribbon they receive. Today's winner can be tomorrow's loser!

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