

March 22, 2021

Good morning Vice Chair Beson and subcommittee members. I appreciate your time and interest in MSU Extension and Michigan 4-H Youth Development.

Like everyone else, Michigan 4-H has spent the last year adapting to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. A year ago, we shifted to offer all our programming virtually, and our commitment to serving Michigan's youth has remained as steadfast as it has for the last century. Through innovative efforts, we have continued to reach current 4-H'ers in new ways. And, we have engaged thousands of youth not previously connected to 4-H; and brought a wider array of 4-H learning to youth across the state.

Through the creative and impassioned efforts of 4-H professionals and volunteers, Michigan 4-H has:

- Supported clubs, councils and committees with technology training so they could stay in touch.
- Adapted existing programs to a virtual format, such as Adulting 101, 4-H Capitol Experience and Home Alone Safely.
- Developed new learning experiences on countless topics, delivering content through webinars, online forums, virtual events, educational videos, curriculum and activities, asynchronous educational kits, and much more.
- Created nearly 300 SPIN Clubs—about 70 more than in the previous year. SPIN – or Special Interest clubs -- meet for a limited amount of time to explore specific topics and themes from babysitting to junk drawer robotics, and Jedi training to sign language. As we speak, 4-H members are getting ready to take a virtual horseback ride across the state to learn about Michigan's features and history. Others will walk those paths virtually.

Our change in face-to-face programming also necessitated changes in one of our longest-standing partnerships: local fairs. We worked closely with the Michigan Association of Fairs and Exhibitions and developed:

- **Michigan 4-H Virtual Showcases and Auctions.** These online experiences allowed youth to still showcase the skills they learned through 4-H, receive constructive feedback, be recognized for their accomplishments, and sell their projects.
- The concept was so successful that the Michigan State Fair asked us to partner with them to offer youth opportunities through our virtual format.
- More than 3,000 young people completed nearly 10,000 projects through the virtual showcases and nearly 4,000 buyers invested \$1.4 million in 4-H projects through 17 virtual auctions.
- As we hope and plan for more face to face interactions at fairs this summer, we have many partners still asking how to incorporate 4-H virtual classes and auctions into traditional fair experiences.

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4-H is an educational partner to schools and families – 2020 was no different, but how we did it certainly was. As the return of the school year neared this past summer, we heard from existing partners that we could best support them through supplements to virtual learning.

- To support our formal education partners, we built a comprehensive website for parents, teachers and homeschool families that showcased curricula, activities, lessons, videos, and other resources that enhance online learning through hands-on activities.
- 950 school administrators and teachers helped us identify focus areas that will help our professionals further support their learning goals.

Though we have had remarkable engagement this past year, learned valuable lessons and achieved many successes, our 4-H community – including our own staff -- are eager to return to in-person programming. MSU Extension and Michigan 4-H professionals are working diligently to chart a path toward that goal. Our internal task force meets weekly to discuss parameters and guidelines that will be necessary to meet in person and protect public health.

Through this committee, we have developed approved activities for 4-H that allow Michigan 4-H volunteers and members to begin conducting limited, contactless business. We update this list monthly. We also developed and released a multi-page document to our fair partners that provides guidance on how we can work together as they make decisions about 2021 summer fair events.

Though it is premature to cite a specific date when face-to-face programming will begin, we will continue to offer high-quality virtual programming as we explore options.

Thanks for giving me the time to today to tell you about the many ways Michigan 4-H continues to serve our youth.

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