Dear 4-H Families and Volunteers,

This month, hundreds of 4-H'ers from around the state will participate in one of our five 4-H Building Leadership and Understanding (BLU) youth leadership conferences.

The annual regional youth conferences are planned and facilitated by our Minnesota 4-H State Ambassadors. The ambassadors use a youth-teaching-youth approach to teach their peers about leadership and engage participants in hands-on activities, games, small group discussions, and a dance during each event. This year’s topic is called “Find Your Element.” The focus will help youth explore how they can live out the passions in their lives. The 4-H BLU conferences are one important way that we provide youth with hands-on opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills.

If you aren’t familiar with 4-H BLU, or the statewide 4-H Youth Exploring Leadership and Learning Outloud! (YELLO!) youth conference in June, I encourage you to explore these wonderful leadership opportunities for youth and adult volunteers.

Go to our website to find more information about the youth events BLU and YELLO that are coming up.

Sincerely,

Dorothy M. Freeman
Associate Dean and State 4-H Director
Becker County

Fruit and Watkins Fundraising

Top sellers will receive cash prizes. Be sure to contact your club leaders for your sales packets and please utilize those packets for all your important dates and information. Contact your club leader or the 4-H Office if you have any questions. Good Luck 4-H’ers in selling Fruit and Watkins Products.

Livestock Committee Meeting

The next Livestock Committee Meeting is scheduled for February 2, 7pm at the Becker County Extension Office.

Ambassador Meeting

An Ambassador Meeting will be held on February 8, 6:30-8pm at the Extension Office. If anyone is still interested in being an Ambassador please attend the meeting or contact Kari if you are unable to be there. It is never too late to participate as an ambassador. Members only need to be in grades 6 or above and share a passion for working together within the county program.

Market Beef & Dairy Steers Eartags

All market beef and dairy steers need to be identified within 4-H Online by February 15. More information will be sent out to the members enrolled in the beef project area when we receive eartags at the county office. If you are intending to exhibit Market Beef or Dairy Steers and have not yet completed your enrollment in the Beef project, please visit 4-H Online to complete or update your enrollment or contact the 4-H Office immediately.

Rate of Gain Contest

Rate of Gain contest will be held again this year for all market animal species. The Market Beef Weigh Day is tentatively set for February 27 with weigh locations of Doug Ulmer’s from 10am-12pm and Shawn Eckert’s from 1-3pm. Post cards will be sent out with more information closer to the weigh date.

Change in Next Council Meeting

Due to Fruit and Watkins sales needing to be turned in…the next Council Meeting will be one week earlier on February 29, 6:30pm at the 4-H office. Club leaders are to turn in their fundraising packets that night or earlier. Wild Things is scheduled to provide refreshments.

Bigger Family Prospect Dairy Steer Donation

NEW this year. The Bigger Family of Frazee, Minnesota is starting a scholarship opportunity for Becker County 4-H’ers interested in the Dairy Steer Project. The Bigger Family Prospect Dairy Steer Donation will be an application process and the 4-H’er chosen as the recipient will receive a steer calf by May 1. The 4-H’er will show the steer the first year as a dairy prospect steer and then for a second year as a dairy market steer. Once the steer is shown for two years at the county fair, the animal belongs to the 4-H’er for them to proceed as they best see fit. The application can be found on the Becker County website under downloads the week of January 11 and is due to the 4-H Office by March 1. Many items will be taken into consideration from the hand written application, such as what facilities and housing can you provide for the animal, how will you financially support the proper growth of the animal, what goals do you have within the project area, how will you share your experience with others, etc. Please contact the 4-H Office with further questions and watch for an email notification of when the application is ready for downloading on the county website.

Family Livestock Meeting

There will be a Family Livestock Meeting for Beef, Dairy, Goats, Llama, Poultry, Rabbit, Sheep and Swine exhibitor families on March 17, 6:30pm, location is To Be Determined. This is focused towards all Livestock Project Members and Families to cover new, and review old, information, answer questions, and assist with getting all required information turned in.
Northern Pines 4-H Camp

Any youth in grades 9 and up interested in being a camp counselor for the Northern Pines 4-H Camp should let Kari know. Camp will be June 4-7 for counselors and 5-7 for campers. Camp Counselor training is tentatively set for 9am-9pm on April 2 at Northern Pines Camp. Application will be available under downloads on our county website the middle of January.

Make N Take Day

The Becker County 4-H “Make N Take Day” will be held on April 9, 9-11:30am at the Lincoln Education Center. Stay tuned for further information about sessions, cost and the finalized schedule. Watch your mail for registration information as pre-registration will be needed to the 4-H office by March 28. You are more than welcome to bring a friend.

State News and Events

NW Youth Leadership Award

There will be $500 cash awards presented to young adults between the ages of 17 and 21! Applications must be postmarked no later than March 4. Your 4-H Program Coordinator has additional details as well as the application.

This award is given by the Red River Valley Development Association to further the higher education of young adults in northwest Minnesota (particularly those in the counties of Becker, Clay, Clearwater, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau and Wilkin. The application requests an essay describing one project the youth was involved in (must be written by the youth), and how leadership skills were used. Additionally, youth must list other activities and their leadership roles in each, whether or not they are in or accepted to school beyond high school, what they are or will major in, and how their plans will enrich life in northwest Minnesota. One letter of recommendation must also be included.

Small Scale Sustainable Sheep Farming Event

The second annual Small Scale Sustainable Sheep Farming Event will take place February 20, 10am at the Fosston Civic Center, 215 E. First St., Fosston. This event is open to the public and focuses on the benefits of sheep as part of a sustainable farming system where meat and wool are viable value-added products. More information can be found here.

4-H Summer Intern Positions

Are you looking for work experience in the youth development field?

Once again this year, there will be county-based 4-H summer intern positions throughout the state of Minnesota. Each internship will provide an excellent opportunity to learn more about University of Minnesota Extension and explore job opportunities in 4-H Youth Development. Most positions will be for ten or eleven weeks, with flexible starting dates.

Candidates must have a high school diploma, and at least two years of undergraduate study is preferred. Candidates must apply on-line through the University of Minnesota job site. The application materials will include a standard application, résumé, cover letter, list of three references and a college transcript. The summer intern positions will be posted soon. The application deadline is February 15.

For more information, please contact Michele VanDyke, mvandyke@umn.edu
M4-HAVA 2016 Annual Conference

Please consider attending the 31st annual Minnesota 4-H Adult Volunteer Association Conference being held March 17-19 at the Bigwood Event Center/Best Western Inn in Fergus Falls. This year's theme is “Keen, Green, and Lean in 2016”.

The M4-HAVA Conference is a great place for volunteers to learn about what is happening throughout the state and new trends going on in 4-H. You will meet other volunteers who are really excited about 4-H, leave with an arsenal of new activities and ideas from the 32 workshops offered to take back and share with your clubs and counties, and recognize outstanding volunteers and clubs during the annual banquet.

For more information on registration for the 2016 M4-HAVA Conference, Blue Ribbon Awards, and Membership visit our website.

2016 SS&W Spring Leader Certification Training

The Minnesota 4-H Shooting Sports & Wildlife Program Development Committee invites you to attend a 4-H Shooting Sports & Wildlife Leader Certification. The committee recommends that leaders attend the entire certification weekend every five years. Now is your chance to attend.

The training is designed for adults and youth grades 9 and up who lead or would like to lead training in shooting sports or wildlife. Classes will be offered in the disciplines of coordinator, archery, rifle/pistol, shotgun, muzzleloading and wildlife. This training meets the 4-H project leaders' requirements for certification and recertification. Although there is range time allocated in the schedule, the majority of the training is classroom work to become an effective instructor, not to practice your own shooting skills. Please see registration materials for full details.

The training will take place in two sites on April 23-24:

- St. Mary's Church and the Kanabec County Gun Club, Mora
- Worthington Regional Office, Worthington

Registration materials will be available February 1, at this link. The deadline to register is April 8. Disciplines fill quickly, so make sure registration forms are sent in early.

Judging at County Fairs

Minnesota 4-H depends on the skills, talents and dedication of hundreds of adults who judge 4-H projects at county fairs across Minnesota. In support of 4-H judges, Minnesota 4-H offers online training, toolkit resources and more. To learn more or if interested in becoming a 4-H judge, visit this link.

2016 4-H Rube Goldberg Challenge: Crush and Recycle a Can

The 2016 4-H Rube Goldberg Challenge is to create a machine that will crush an empty aluminum soft drink can and put it into a recycling container.

The third annual challenge asks teams of youth to design overly complex contraptions that accomplish this year's designated task using everyday items that interact in a series of chain-reactions. Teams compete in contests at their county fair and then will be eligible to compete at the Minnesota State Fair.

Teams are encouraged to register by May 15 and get started on their machines.

More information about the 4-H Rube Goldberg Challenge and how to register can be found here.

NOTE: No paper registration this year. Team leaders, members and youth coaches will sign up
through 4-H Online accounts. Adult volunteer leaders must register before their team members can register.

What do MN 4-H first year member parents have to say?

In October 2015, the first-year member parent survey was administered to parents of new members in the 2014-2015 program year. We do this survey annually to learn more about the experiences of our families new to the 4-H program. This survey asks parents to give feedback on items such as how welcoming their experience was, if their child had opportunities for learning, and if policies were challenging.

What did we learn this year:

- Overall parents and youth feel welcomed into the program.
- A quarter of parents felt that enrollment and membership policies were challenging.
- 94% of parents said the topics their child worked on were of interest to them.
- 80% of parents agreed that their child became really good at something they worked on.
- We have a large number of youth who are experiencing 4-H for the first time in their family. Over 45% of our survey respondents had never had exposure to the 4-H program in their family history.

Currently teams of educators are looking at this information and thinking about how we can improve the 4-H program to help all our members.

Thank you first year member parents for responding to this survey.

Calendar of Events

February
15 Application deadline for 4-H Summer Intern positions
15 Youth application deadline for the State 4-H Beef Committee

March
5 Regional Project Bowl, Foley
12 Regional Project Bowl, Hastings
17-19 M4-HAVA 2016 Annual Conference, Fergus Falls
19 Regional Project Bowl, Bemidji
19 Regional Project Bowl, Redwood Falls
29 Youth Day at the Capitol

April
2 Regional Project Bowl, snow date
7 County Livestock PDC Training webinar
9-14 National 4-H Conference, Washington, D.C.
16 State Project Bowl, Sauk Rapids
17 County Livestock PDC Training webinar
23-24 4-H SS&W Leader Certification Training, Mora

May
15 Animal ID deadline
15 2-16 4-H Rube Goldberg Challenge registrations due

July
2-9 Citizenship Washington Focus