Keeping an Open Mind— By Jeremy Freeman, Chisago County 4-H Program Coordinator

As a student and staff at Camp Bighorn I had guided many groups and individuals down the Clark Fork River through white water rafting. For the participants, each new wave and bend of the river was unknown and exciting. For me it became comfortable, until we developed a new partnership with a nearby at-risk youth ranch.

Suddenly I had the responsibility of facilitating learning with a group I was completely uncomfortable around. Sitting in the guide seat in the back of the raft only deepened my sense of isolation. Their jokes, language and appearance were vastly different than mine. My judgements both known and subconscious created a barrier where mutual connection was not possible.

It was not an easy process, or a quick one, but through the continuity of working with this group my mind was opened up to new perspectives and insights. I began to see that this group had plenty to offer me and that we had more in common once the surface elements of identity were peeled back and exposed.

This peeling back and opening up of our judgements is needed continually with everyone we work with. We all carry in us biases that often derail the learning and relationship building process. As we learn from this issue focused on Diversity and Cultural Bias I encourage you to look openly at the situations, people and young people you work with and strive to keep an open mind. Be willing to learn through discomfort. Seek to connect before you direct. As you do you will happily say like Alice from Alice in Wonderland, “It’s no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then.”

In 2016 the Cloverteer will be focusing on Creating an Inclusive Environment

March Issue 8: Diversity and Cultural Bias

May Issue 9: Serving Youth with Special Needs

July Issue 10: Supporting Family Dynamics

September Issue 11: 1st Generation 4-H Families

The new 4-H year beginning in October will launch next year’s theme.
Training

Key Leaders Meeting

We will be holding a very important key leaders meeting on April 25 at 6:30-8:30 pm at the North Branch Area Library. We will be covering a number of important topics including:

- New Risk management guidelines
- Updates on the new online fair registration
- County Fair responsibilities for clubs
- Upcoming events and deadlines specifically related to County Fair

It is important that we have representation from each 4-H club present and encourage you to invite other youth or adult volunteers who serve in key roles within your club. Questions can be directed to the Extension Office.

March Module Madness

One of the best ways we can continue to grow as volunteers of our 4-H program is to stay up to date on training materials produced through Minnesota 4-H. Online modules are great ways to bring some reflection time in your current role and apply some new ideas for the future. These trainings take 30 minutes to complete!

To give you some extra incentive, we’ll be promoting Online Volunteer Training during the Volunteer Drive. For every 4-H online module you view, you’ll have one raffle ticket into the drawing.

Raffle prize winners will be drawn on March 18. For more info visit http://www.extension.umn.edu/youth/mm4-H/volunteer/online-training/ or contact the Extension Office to receive a CD with all the training videos included.

Judges Training

If you are interested in getting involved with judging at County Fairs around the State, contact the Extension Office. If we gather enough interest from surrounding counties we may be able to hold a regional training.

2016 SS&W spring Leader Certification Trainings: Two sites!

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 (9th grade and older) that 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.

April 23-24, 2016
St. Mary’s Church and Kanabec County Gun Club, Mora

April 23-24, 2016
Worthington Regional Office, Worthington

Registration materials will be available online Feb. 1 at at www.4-h.umn.edu//events/shooting-sports-certification/. Deadline to register is April 8, 2016. Disciplines fill quickly, so make sure registration forms are sent in early!
Opportunities

Volunteer Drive – March 1-18

4-H is made possible by caring, connected adults who work in partnership with youth to see them reach their maximum potential. If you are one of those caring adults who want to make a difference, join our team of amazing 4-H volunteers in one or more of these opportunities. For a complete job description of any of these roles that are available contact Jeremy Freeman the 4-H Program Coordinator at 651-277-0150 or jeremyf@umn.edu

- Project leader (start a new project club, time commitment varies)
- Club leader (start a new 4-H club, annual with at least six meetings required)
- Robotics Coaches (training provided)
- Ambassador Coordinator (annual)
- Rube Goldberg Coaches (seasonal)
- Site based leaders (Family Pathways Teen Center, afterschool, seasonal)
- Cloverbud Summer Assistant (seasonal)
- Workshop Day Instructors (one time)
- Food Show Coordinator (one time)
- Clothing/Sewing Workshops and Camps Volunteer (one time)
- 5K Run Wild Volunteer (one time)
- Chaperone (YELLO, State Fair)

Summer Assistant: We are looking to hire a summer assistant who will work and support the Extension Office between June 6 and August 5th. Applications and descriptions are posted on the website and more information can be received from the Extension Office. Applications must be received by April 1st to be considered.

Evaluate Your Club through YPQA

The YPQA Process is an evaluative strategy used to increase Program Quality in 4-H clubs.

There are 3 steps:

1. Evaluation at a club meeting by Program Coordinator
2. Follow up meeting with club leaders and a few members/volunteers
3. Creating an action plan

If you are interested in having your club go through the YPQA model contact Jeremy. There are openings for 2 clubs to go through this process through the spring and fall months.

Extension Committee

This committee provides an opportunity to serve a county-wide role to help with Extension program development and evaluation, advocating for the annual Extension budget, and providing advice on the selection and evaluation of county Extension staff. The Extension Committee serves as an advisory committee to the Chisago County Board. More information and applications can be found HERE. Current vacancy is in Commissioner Districts #3 (Chisago City/Lindstrom/Chisago township S).

County Fair Judges

Are you interested in judging projects at the County Fair? Contact us today as we will begin recruiting new judges through the spring!
Resources

WeConnect – Lesson 2-3

One of the roots of disconnection between people is fear. Lesson 2-3 in the WeConnect curriculum allow youth to explore how fear can get in the way of learning about each other. In these lessons, youth work together to make casts of each other’s faces. The fact that this lesson may be uncomfortable for some youth can be compared to the risk they take in attempting to connect to others. Youth explore the complexity of human diversity by creating lists that describe their “life history.” Then, using these lists, they decorate their masks to reflect their diversity.

The WeConnect Curriculum can be borrowed from the Extension Office and viewed online.

Diversity Videos

The Extension Center for Youth Development diversity and inclusion shared learning cohort provided a year-long staff development opportunity to 15 staff members. The cohort focused on a digital media campaign to facilitate the transformation process within the organization as it strives to serve more diverse audiences across the state. Topics of the films include building partnerships across cultures, culturally responsive youth-adult partnerships, serving youth with disabilities, religious inclusion and working with immigrant youth.

Click below to watch an example of how volunteers and staff in Winona County created partnerships to grow their 4-H program.

To view a panel of all of the diversity videos click here: Diversity Videos

10 Ways to Engage New Communities

Josey Landrieu, a former UMN 4-H Extension Educator developed a great document that highlights 10 ways to engage new communities. If you are currently looking to work with new or diverse groups in your local clubs or communities download a copy of this great resource by clicking here: 10 Ways

Important tips for positive cross-cultural communication

As we work towards culturally inclusive and open relationships, there are some key issues to remember. Differences in culture and values aren’t things that need to be “fixed;” rather, it is the responsibility of everyone to work towards a mutual understanding of one another. As you do so, be willing and open to challenges; it is at the edge of our limits where we experience the most growth. If you feel angry, upset, or afraid, take a step back and examine your feelings before you become defensive or critical. Be willing to listen to others talk about their experiences without taking it personally and listen attentively even if the message is difficult to hear.

Consider the Cultural Competency Dos and Don’ts when communicating across differences:

- Do recognize your own privileges in different dominant groups
- Do be willing to share your story
- Don’t assume that you know everything there is to know about someone else or over-identify with them.
- Don’t insist that all conversations get neatly wrapped up.

The full document that includes more great tips can be downloaded by clicking here: Building Relationships Across Differences.
Knowledge

Me? Biased? Implicit Bias in Youth Work by Kathryn Sharpe

Extension Educator Kathryn Sharpe gets right to the point, we all have bias and that’s okay, as long as we recognize it and consciously make efforts to mitigate bias. Enjoy!

“What do these situations have in common: a youth worker addressing challenging behavior, a judge deciding on ribbons at the state fair and a hiring committee interviewing candidates? Answer: In each of these situations, people are making decisions based on both conscious and unconscious factors. Neurosocial research is revealing that human beings are influenced constantly by both positive and negative subconscious associations about others, based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, weight, accents and many other aspects of our identity. This phenomenon is known as implicit bias and has significant implications in our behavior and judgments.

Why do we need to be concerned about implicit bias in youth work? After all, youth workers tend to be an open-minded community. Yet the research on the neuroscience behind implicit bias reveals that these associations inherently occur outside of our conscious awareness, therefore we cannot identify them or change them simply through logical thought. The effects of implicit bias in our associations – and therefore in our decision making – can be empirically measured through a simple but effective test called the Implicit Association Test. Taking it demonstrates that we all make subconscious judgments and they frequently conflict with our explicitly stated attitudes and beliefs. These biases have tangible effects in how we relate to others and can cause prejudicial behavior.

For example, the “in-group/out-group bias” refers to our more positive perception of people similar to us, and our more negative perception of people different than us. This could mean that we might be more likely to reward the performance of youth with whom we identify, for example, or be quicker to discipline youth who are different from us.

Once we have identified our areas of implicit bias, there are some strategies that we can employ on an individual level to mitigate them:

- By sharing experiences with people from the group about whom we have subconscious judgments, we can establish new associations. To be effective, the individuals should share equal status, common goals, and be in a cooperative rather than a competitive environment.
- Implicit biases tend to be strongest in situations where a decision-maker is under time pressure or stress, so intentionally slowing down the process can help us to use more deliberative, less biased thinking.

Even so, research indicates that simply educating individuals is not enough; systemic changes need to be built into organizations to mitigate bias. Some organizational debiasing strategies:

- To mitigate in-group/out-group bias in hiring decisions, remove any identifying information from applications before reviewing them.
- When making decisions about discipline, create a policy of engaging another person, ideally someone who will have a different perspective, to help work through the decision in a deliberative way.

Where do you recognize that implicit bias may have an impact in your work or your organization? How might you use one of the de-biasing strategies to create a more reflective and equitable environment for youth in your community?”

Editor’s note: This article was published as part of the Youth Development Insight blog on October 21, 2015 and is used with permission.
Calendar - Stay connected by following the Chisago County Calendar of events online! Bookmark this website to have instant access to all of the meetings and events: Chisago County 4-H Calendar

MARCH

• 10  Horse Project Kickoff Night, 6:30 pm @ Almelund Town Hall (see page 6)
• 15  Shooting Sports BB Gun and Air Rifle Practices begin (see page 5)
• 15  Chisago County Cottontails meeting, 6:30 pm, Location TBA (see page 6)
• 17  Dairy Project meeting, 6:30 pm at North Branch SR Center
• 18  Volunteer Drive Module Contest ends
• 19  Cheese Sales pickup by Club Volunteers, 10:00 am @ Sue Humble's House (see page 5)
• 22  Livestock Quality Assurance and Ethics Training (LQA&E 1 and 2), 6:00-9:00 pm @ North Branch SR Center (see page 5)

APRIL

• 1  Deadline for Swine Grant Applications (see page 3)
• 1  Deadline for Food Show Registration (see page 3)
• 1  Deadline for Summer Assistant Applications (see page 4)
• 9  Food and Bread Show, 10:00 – 12:00 @ North Branch SR Center (see page 3)
• 12  Management Board meeting, 7:00 pm at Lake State Credit Union (see page 6)
• 19  Chisago County Cottontails meeting, 6:30 pm, Chisago Lakes Area Library
• 21  Dairy Project meeting, 6:30 pm at North Branch SR Center

MAY

• 7  Sheep and Goat Weigh Day, TBA (see page 4)
• 7  GREY – Time and location to be announced, (see page 7)
• 16  Deadline for Animal ID including lease forms (to be eligible for State Fair) (see page 4)
• 16  Deadline for 4-H enrollment (to be eligible for State Fair)
• 16  Deadline for Rube Goldberg Registration
• 16  Early Deadline for PICCKM Camp
• 16  Early Deadline for Run Wild 5K