Recharging our 4-H batteries

As October draws near, 4-H members are focusing on completing one year and beginning a new one. This is a busy month for members, parents and club leaders alike.

National 4-H Week is Oct. 1-7 and celebration preparations are in full swing. The annual 4-H Achievement Program will be held Sunday, Oct. 7. During this program, 4-H members are recognized for their accomplishments throughout the year. October is also the time to reflect on the past year's achievements and hardships with 4-H projects and to look forward to future projects.

During this time of reflection, it's also important to recharge your 4-H batteries. Anyone who has been involved in 4-H, whether as a member, parent or leader, knows the joys and also the frustrations that come with being involved in the 4-H program. With this in mind, I decided to do a little research to see what I could find to help us all recharge and to remember why 4-H is one of the outstanding youth organizations in the world.

I discovered the National 4-H History Preservation Program, which provides a wealth of information about the rich history of 4-H.

The first paragraph on the preservation program's website reads, "The history of 4-H is one of the most significant and far-reaching stories in America: a story of youth education, community pride and responsibility, personal leadership and volunteerism. Truly unique—born at the grassroots level and involving special public-private partnerships at the local, state and national levels—it represents the very essence of America's growth."

After reading this paragraph, I felt my "4-H battery" begin to recharge!

As I continued perusing the 4-H history preservation website, I came across some quotes about 4-H, said by people over the decades that 4-H has been in existence. Some quotes related to personal experience, while others spoke of 4-H in general and 4-H's impact on society.

The following are just a sampling of interesting quotes from years of 4-H work.

"Probably no activity is of more importance to the future standing, prosperity and social position of agriculture than the Boys' and Girls' Farm Clubs. Their activities warrant the belief that they will greatly aid in the solution of many of the problems of farm life, and it gives me very great pleasure to accept the Honorary Chairmanship of the National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club Work."—President Calvin Coolidge, 1927.

"I was down to the Los Angeles Livestock Show, and I saw these hundreds of farmer boys that had fattened and cared for a calf, or pig, or sheep, themselves. It's a thing called the 4-H Club. Somebody was inspired when they founded that. It's all over the country. By golly, they are a great bunch of kids, and they have some fine stock."—Will Rogers, 1934.

"The 4-H Clubs believe in and practice the full development of our talents. They believe in physical and mental health. Beyond this there is an underlying creed of honesty of purpose. These objectives and practical projects make the 4-H Clubs a tremendous influence for the betterment of our country."—Fred M. Vinson, secretary of the treasury, 1946.

"I consider the work of the 4-H Club in building character one of the finest undertakings in all America."—Albert S. Goss, master, National Grange, April 1948.

"I like 4-Hers because they are dedicated to excellence; they want to do things better ... Next thing I like about them is their examples to other young people. They lead us to greater dedication to our country. They are, by their work, indeed, making this country a better one ... As long as we have young people of these characteristics, devoted with their hearts and their heads and their hands and their health to doing these things, America cannot be anything but successful."—President Dwight D. Eisenhower, at the 1959 dedication of the National 4-H Center.

“4-H is about building better citizens, teaching values and developing the skills necessary to leading a good and profitable life. And it doesn’t matter if you’re from a farm environment or from a big city. 4-H worked for me and I’ve continued to work for it.”—Orville Redenbacher, California, 1983 Alumni Winner.

“You know, if every kid in the inner cities in this country belonged to 4-H, we wouldn’t have much of a crime problem ...”—President Bill Clinton at Montana State University, May 31, 1995.

As 4-H once again celebrates National 4-H Week, we are reminded of the amazing youth development opportunities offered by this timeless organization. Take a moment to reflect on these quotes about 4-H from some of our nation’s leaders. Talk with current or former 4-H members. Ask them what 4-H did for them.

Recharge your 4-H batteries and prepare to jump into a new 4-H year! You never know what kind of an impact you may be making on today’s youth and tomorrow’s leaders.

For more information on enrolling in Phillips County 4-H or volunteering for 4-H, please contact the Phillips County Extension Office at 970-854-3616. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

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