

Nine years as a 4-H member has created countless memories and experiences. The greatest opportunities have all been presented by 4-H and each has brought lifelong lessons. There is no shortage of ways that 4-H has influenced my personal development. Looking back, some experiences have been great teaching moments and influence life to this day. They all stem from livestock projects, which introduced me to the amazing agriculture industry.

One such experience has been showing dairy goats thanks to the 4-H leasing program. Livestock is one of the first things that people associate with 4-H, but not all members live on a farm. I am one such member but have still been able to show goats with the help of friends. The first goat was the most challenging; she was timid, flighty, scared of people, and hard to control. Upon working with her, the goals fell into place, creating a road map to success in the show ring. 4-Hers often struggle with goals, but this experience helped develop goal setting skills with ease. Having such an animal also required a lot of understanding and patience, which led to developing cooperation, despite the goat's timid nature, and choosing to work with her anyway. But there were times when it did not seem worth it. It took half an hour to catch her out of the field and became overwhelming to do so every day. Nonetheless, I persevered and chose to work with her every single day, despite the mood I was in, because it takes hard work and dedication to be successful. That year, we placed second in every showmanship class, but looking back at our progress is what truly brings pride.

The dairy goat project led to getting other youth involved in exploring animal agriculture, specifically dairy goats. I have always been willing to work with younger club members and mentor them in 4-H activities, many of whom also do not live on a farm. Sharing knowledge along the way, these younger members are encouraged to help with my animals' feeding, fitting,

and exercising. In doing so, I exhibit leadership, something that now goes hand in hand with showing livestock. These leadership experiences have been impactful and build character as I focus on giving experiences to others instead of focusing on myself. Ultimately, the hope is to give younger members the same opportunities I had.

In the words of John Maxwell, “Champions don’t become champions in the ring - they are merely recognized there.” This quote speaks volumes because champions are made by working to become the best one can be. This is what it took to be champion Ayrshire showman at the 2018 Maryland State Fair. Despite being the first year showing dairy cattle, I managed to come out on top. While this came with a great deal of pride, there were also numerous life skills that developed along the way. Just a few include determination and self-motivation to go to the barn even on the bad days and put forth the best effort with my heifer. Preparation did not just include working her, but also fitting and studying to be prepared when we entered the ring. Winning seemed impossible as more experienced showmen entered the ring, but I never stopped trying and came out on top. Afterwards, there was humility and character in congratulating the other winners and thanking all who had a part in the success. The experience in the ring is unforgettable, but the best parts of showing dairy cattle have been making friends, spending time on the farm, and learning everything possible about the dairy industry.

When I look through the best memories and greatest experiences, most of them involve 4-H and are experiences that I otherwise never would have had. Livestock has been a focal point throughout the years. These projects have taught practical skills of hard work, commitment, and a desire to always be better. But more importantly, they have created a true leader that intends to give other 4-Hers the opportunities to be successful and continue making the best better.

Maryland 4-H Essay Score Sheet

Name: _____

County: _____

	Perfect Score	Actual Score	Comments
<p>Addresses Essay Questions/Topic <i>What would you suggest 4-H do to increase involvement from youth your age?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written from personal experience • Current, factual information • Indicates a dedication to 4-H • Shows 4-H participation at club, county and state levels and in a variety of program areas and activities 	8		
<p>Creativity and Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting to read • Good use of the language • Inventive and creative • Good introduction and conclusion • Main points well organized • Logical flow 	8		
<p>Format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct spelling and grammar • Appropriate font size (12 pt.) and style (Times New Roman) • Correct margins (1-in) and layout (double-spaced) • Proper length (2 pages max) • Good eye contact 	4		
Total	20		

Note to Judges: The essay is one part of the 4-Her's total portfolio. Other components and their point values include: Resume (40 pts) and Interview (40 pts).

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