

Inside 4-H

Sarah Beale

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The Month of January 2021

Well well well...We made it through 2020! Who would've guessed? A new year means new possibilities and opportunities. Let's hope that these possibilities are a little bit more normal than what 2020 offered! However, last year had some (less obvious) benefits as well. We learned how to be more resilient and how to operate virtually...a task that some of us are still figuring out. Events were unfortunately cancelled and relationships were harder to build, but all of that showed us how to be strong. In the new year, with the hope that the world will return to somewhat normal, the goal is not only to restore our common traditions, but also add some improved techniques.

With the hopes that the new year will transform back to normal ways to allow us to do the usual 4-H activities, also comes the possible reality that the world will not restore to normal in the very near future. Therefore, leaders and members are brainstorming and constructing activities for when we must stay virtual or social distanced. Some popular events include game nights, discovering new groups with the same interests, and even inviting guest speakers.

This month specifically, there was a beef weigh in on January 9th. The event was held a little differently this year, like using google forms for registration and obviously the new safety guidelines, but we saw just the same positivity and participation with 16 steer weighed in total.

The 2021 4-H Enrollment website is open now. Every year the 4-H Online system re-sets both youth and adult memberships. To enroll for the new year, current members are encouraged to sign-up by March 1st at <https://v2.4honline.com/>. Of course, new members are welcome to join all throughout the year.

A new 4-H Forestry club is kicking off this year in the state of Maryland! The new group is hoping to launch in March and work until the state competition planned in June. Those who place in the top fourth will practice for the National Competition in West Virginia toward late July. The meetings will be held virtually, and will be recorded for those unable to attend on the determined dates. Field sessions will hopefully be included in the program to provide better experience for the members.

The 2021 officers of each 4-H club are taking their places. Teaching members how to be responsible is one of 4-H's greatest traits. Especially by going virtual, officers are presented with the challenge of being good role models while not being able to interact normally with members. Last year officers did a swell job despite the transition, and therefore I am confident that the new officers will do the same.

Officer training for the new leaders is to be held on January 30th. Here, members will learn how to successfully run a meeting and

encourage others as a leadership figure in their clubs. I will be participating as well, since this year I am acting as the president of my club.

This next month will hopefully embark on a successful transition into 2021. Try to stay safe and positive, and (if you have them) remember your New Year resolutions!

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The Month of March 2021

We have made it through yet another month of this crazy pandemic! Three months into 2021 and I think we are getting a better handle of the drastic change. Sometimes the best way to thrive is by experiencing chaos and learning how to be resilient. This may seem like a never-ending tribulation, but finding a purpose for positivity can be very rewarding. Spring is nearing, so get out and enjoy nature! 4-Hers start getting busy themselves in the warming months as well. Members are deciding on which projects they would like to have this year and begin finding the best ways to complete their projects. Setting goals for projects can help members stay organized and motivated, but also provide a major source of satisfaction when those goals are completed.

Beginning the record books creates a guide on how to work through projects. Now still in the early stages of the year, members can document their chosen projects, decide on project goals, and begin tracking expenses. Record keeping is especially important for livestock raisers. Those who have livestock projects are beginning to really get involved with their animals in hopes of a successful fall fair. It is best to begin working with your animal from the time they are very young, so that they can be comfortable with their owner.

One activity that is being endorsed by the local 4-H office is the broiler chick project. This project involves raising chickens from the time they are born to the time they are from 6 to 8 weeks old. The owners of these chicks are responsible for keeping records everyday documenting the progress of the chicks. This project effectively teaches members how to nurture a chick from its primary days, and how to be able to relinquish your animal when it is time for butchering.

But before you start on your projects, you have to make sure you are registered!! Registering for 4-H is simple and very important. Members were asked to enroll before March 1st. If you would still like to join 4-H, you are welcome to participate anytime throughout the year, and once you become a member you are asked to enroll annually.

Other local activities have taken place throughout the last few months. These include Shooting Stars (Archery & Air Rifle) Club virtual meets, a Launch into Leadership (activities involving youth in leading 4-H activities) Session, a dairy fun day, a dog fun day, Diamond Clover participation deadlines, the State dairy skillathon, a state dairy bowl, a public speaking workshop and more have all happened or been scheduled to take place in the the near future. Amazingly, although the pandemic has made gathering and collaborating tougher, 4-H leaders and members have continued to show their spirit and support through much participation!

A sign of thanks for that participation will be displayed at the Annual 4-H Banquet on March 13. Here, members with their families and leaders

gather to celebrate the past year. Acknowledgement and awards are given to many in gratitude for their hard work. Last year, the banquet was pushed to be virtual due to COVID situations. But that doesn't mean 4-H had any less fun. A co-4-Her and very good friend of mine, Bridget Cory, and I moderated the banquet last year. We helped leaders put together an exciting presentation and attended the banquet via Zoom along with many others. This year, we are hoping to do something similar, with pre-recorded sections, but just the same enthusiasm. Apart from the fair, the banquet is one of the best places to find 4-Hers all around having a good time. Unfortunately we will not be able to have the banquet in person like traditional matters, but we know the 4-H spirit will carry on and supply an amazing time for recognizing all of the dedication the community has given to this program.

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The Month of April 2021

What a relief to have made it to spring! We reached the one year anniversary of schools shutting down, organizations canceling events and the beginning of an unexpected pandemic.

However, in Southern Maryland, there has been much effort in attempts to regain what we used to count as normal. Schools have gone back to somewhat regular sessions, clubs and groups have been carefully meeting again and that means that 4-H has also progressed. We recently received word of the possibility that 4-H clubs may be able approved to start meeting in-person again. That is very exciting news for us and some clubs have already begun planning for reunions.

The livestock projects are really starting to kick off. Members are looking for their project animals, planning for a possible show and auction season, and preparing their animals as effectively as possible. Around this time, selective kinds of livestock are being born or purchased by the 4-H livestock owner and the beginning of the nurturing process starts. The 4-H program supplies a variety of assistance for the members. Training sessions, skillathons and resources are offered to youth who are participating in livestock activities. At some meetings, videos, fun quizzes, and trivia are presented to spread awareness and knowledge about livestock in order to get members interested and to help guide members following a certain livestock project.

The 4-H program is a chance for youth to get more involved in their communities. As a part of the club and through the Diamond Clover program done by many 4-H members, the youth are encouraged to hold fundraisers, drives (canned foods, coats, etc.), group activities and more. In these events, not only the members hosting the activities, but also other members of the community display their support. The participation of youth locally is incredibly important, since we will be the next dependable generation. Although the pandemic has caused 4-H to reduce socialization, the members have remained resilient and used virtual or precautions events. They are now able to begin holding more functions supporting 4-H and their progress in the Diamond Clover program.

One of the highlights of summer for 4-Hers is attending camp. These camps are incredibly fun and many look forward to participating in them again. Due to the pandemic, the camps were canceled last year. However, we hope to get back to the old tradition. In St. Mary's County, a local 5-day camp was held with a

Farmer's Safety event on the last day. We also ventured to western Maryland to an overnight camp for a few days for the first time in 2019. Many 4-Hers, including myself, were eager to go back again last year but unfortunately we couldn't take any chances. This year, hopefully we will be able to go back to take part in even more fun activities.

One thing I think many of us — 4-Hers and the general community — have learned from this pandemic is how to stay resilient, and how challenging staying resilient and patient can be. Even through all of the negative aspects there are positive things. We must remember to persevere even when times get tough, and show the world just how strong we are. I wish you a lovely beginning to your spring season and many good wishes for enduring through the pandemic.

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The Month of May 2021

In Southern Maryland, the weather has been spectacular. As the saying goes, April showers bring May flowers. That phrase sure has followed through for us this spring. Although we have had a lot of rainfall and some cool nights, the daytime has provided lovely temperatures. Many students are counting down days until the last week of school and the first day of summer. Crabbing season opened in April and boats are becoming more popular on the river.

In terms of 4-H, members are growing busier and busier. By this time, members who are participating in livestock projects have typically begun raising their animals. The Market Animal Weigh-in for livestock is currently scheduled for May 22nd. At this event, members register and weigh their animals. Around fair time there will be another weigh-in to enter the livestock for the shows and auctions. The animal's weight is important for the owner to know to keep them healthy and track the weight. During the show at the fair, the judge may ask the owner questions concerning their animal. A popular question the judge may ask is approximately what the rate of gain is for the animal, so it is important that the 4-Her know this information.

Members will also be participating in the broiler chick project this year. The chicks arrived around the middle of April. These chicks are designed to grow at a very fast rate for quick growth and a sooner butchering date.

In other news, the air rifle program planned for its first practice of 2021 in late April. A team participated in the Maryland 4-H State Dairy Bowl on April 17th. The Horse Communications Contest registration deadline ended April 21st. For the contest, members are asked to record their speeches. A 2021 Spring Show will take place in Charles County of Southern Maryland from June 4 through June 6. The entry deadline for the show is May 26, 2021.

State virtual activity clubs are in progress. The club topics include historic arts and crafts, learning about travel opportunities with 4-H, a sewing club, and a book club.

The St. Mary's 4-H Day Camp will run July 7-9 with limited spots. Many fun activities and learning opportunities are held at the camp. We have had an incredibly fun time participating in the past, but with the CoronaVirus we were unable to attend in person.

The Maryland State 4-H office is educating teens in becoming Agriculture Innovators to teach other youth about the program in the summer. The program's topic is about the climate and how youth and Agriculture are helping the climate.

The Maryland 4-H Foundation is offering the opportunity for academic scholarships to Maryland 4-H members and Maryland 4-H alum pursuing post-secondary education at a college, university, or post-secondary technical training program. The Maryland 4-H Foundation awards an average of \$50,000 in scholarships annually. The entry deadline to apply is June 15th, 2021.

Lastly, the County fair in St. Mary's County is scheduled this year! This has been a huge relief and joy for 4-H to hear especially. The fair will be held from September 23 through the 26th. Although many members had fun participating in an alternate auction last year through the Bustin' Out of the Barn show, we are very excited to be going back to our traditional show ring. So, if you are available that exciting weekend in September, consider visiting beautiful Southern Maryland and seeing our annual county fair. We will be thrilled to welcome you. For now, enjoy the spring and stay safe!

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The Month of July 2021

Hello again to all! Our warm temperatures seem to keep rising as the pandemic numbers are lowering. In St. Mary's County, Maryland, more and more people are getting vaccinated and therefore allowing the local 4-H clubs to begin holding in-person events. Summer is one of the most exciting and lively seasons for agriculture-involved families. Hard work is needed during the day while enjoying the beautiful weather and participating in fun summer activities are called for in the evenings. Crops are growing, kids are swimming, and the pre-pandemic ways are slowly emerging.

On June 28th, the Teen Leadership Summit was held for teenage 4-H members this summer in Carroll County. The program prepared youth for future college and career goals to welcome new available opportunities. Members from ages 13-18 attended this event.

Utah has started their 4-H Remote Skills Camp. All teenagers from the age of 15 to 18 are welcome to participate. The event is a thirty-day camp that prepares teens for future possibilities by practicing work skills and opening the door to questions and answers with remote workers from NASA, Google, and more. Members learn so much by taking part in the 4-H program; the lessons they learn often stick with them through later stages in life. With activities like these, members not only learn valuable lessons, but are also put forth into the world for possible future opportunities.

Many people thought of the pandemic as a time for experimenting new hobbies or improving their current skills. Some took up sewing for self-expression through fashion, others might have tried gardening for a healthier lifestyle. Pennsylvania 4-H, however, is opening a free virtual cooking camp to all families around the country where 4-Hers can learn how to cook new and exciting summer meals, snacks, and desserts. The registration date for this program is July 14, so if you still want to try something new this year, be sure to check it out!

Onto more local news, the 4-H Robotics Club will be holding challenges on August 29th with registration closing on July 31st through 4-H Online. The two challenges are the Lego Robotics Challenge and the Robotics Engineering Challenge. Every county is able to submit two teams per age group for each challenge.

The 2021 Virtual Equine Art and Photography Contest is returning. The popular Maryland State 4-H Horse Virtual Art and Photography Contest is designed to provide participants the opportunity to express their creativity while demonstrating their

knowledge about equine. The classes available include fine arts, photography, and visual arts. Registration and entry uploads for this contest closes on July 12th through 4-H Online.

For those interested in woodland activities, youth from the Maryland 4-H Forestry Club are welcome to take part in the National 4-H Forestry Invitational. The event will be held at Jackson's Mill State 4-H Camp in West Virginia. The three day competitions allow members from age 14-18 to display their forestry skills and knowledge.

If any of those activities listed above sound interesting to you, contact our lovely 4-H coordinator, Ms. Allred, or visit the 4-H office website . Even if you don't live near St. Mary's, you can still reach out to your local 4-H coordinator to see what's going on near you. And if you are not a member, anytime is a wonderful time to try 4-H since it is a welcoming and inspiring program to be a part of. Until next time, enjoy summer, stay cool, and let's continue to make our way out of this pandemic!

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The Month of August 2021

It seems that August has already slipped away into a moment in time. A cool breeze returns every so often to remind us of the summer season so quickly ending, and a new start soon beginning in fall. School is starting for many in the next month or two, prompting a mixture of emotions from students and parents alike. While summer may be missed, many look forward to autumn's soothing conditions. 4-Hers around Southern Maryland especially love the upcoming excitement of the fair and livestock shows.

This year, the fair is planned for dates Thursday, September 23rd through Sunday, the 26th. The livestock is typically brought in by the 4-Hers the week of the event. Then, time is spent adjusting the animals to their new environment, familiarizing the 4-H members to the showing area, and allowing the participants to socialize with each other.

By the time the fair starts, members are immediately getting to work. Livestock shows start on Thursdays, kicking off the fair in a lively way. The shows continue through to Saturday, when often, the fair becomes the busiest. At this time, the community gets to enjoy the exhibition and also meet the animals up close. People are welcome to visit the animals in the barn, during times when shows for that particular animal are not in process. The 4-H members love engaging the community in our projects. At the fair, you can find St. Mary 4-Hers teaching others about their animals, sharing info about the shows, and maybe even handing out coloring sheets.

Saturday evening is the night of the auction. This is when members who have chosen to sell their animals are given the opportunity to do so. The auction goes in sections, rotating between each animal. Graciously, members of the community stay until the end of the auction to support 4-Hers and auctioneers encourage the participants as they are in the ring. All around, the event is uplifting and frazzling. But Sunday can be spent enjoying fair food, the rides, and exhibits inside the 4-H building leaving the 4-Hers with a relaxing end to such an exciting weekend.

But before we reach the fair, there is some other business to attend to. The entries for the Maryland State Fair are now open. And this year, there is a category for clover members, meaning those between the ages of 5 and 7. This year, the fair will be held in person, spanning from August 26 through September 4 at the Fairgrounds in Timonium, Maryland. You can find out more by going to the Maryland State Fair website.

A public speaking workshop was held on July 19th, teaching members about the importance of the skill. This program also prepared the members for the upcoming public speaking contest.

Here, participants will be submitting their entries online. They can choose between the categories of prepared speech, radio spot, interpretation, extemporaneous, or clover pledge.

Lastly, I have some very sad news to announce. On July 24th, a dear friend of 4-H passed away. Joseph "Bobby" Vallandingham was a supporter, a friend, and patron to 4-H, along with so much more. He was cheerful and welcoming to all of the 4-H youth and families. He, along with his wife, Susan, and children, Trent, Delia, Levi, and Colby, have been friends of 4-H for numerous years. He will be missed by the 4-H community and so many others most dearly.

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The Month of October 2021

In St. Mary's County we are so excited to welcome the comfortable season of fall! Autumn is a well loved time in Southern Maryland, from pumpkin patches and Halloween to admiring the falling leaves and beautiful sights. It also brings new seasonal activities that can be enjoyed with loved ones, as safely as possible of course. This year, 4-H has done an incredible job with dealing with the pandemic and also gaining beneficial insight for how to deal with difficult situations if they are to arise again. In St. Mary's last year, the county was unable to hold an in-person fair. This year, we couldn't wait to get back into the normal groove of things and welcome fall with our usual fair celebration.

The fair was held from September 23rd to the 26th. The traditional activities like the horse pulls and shows, the parade, the pig races, fair rides, and more were held as usual and gained much attention from the public. The wonderful sight of people socializing and connecting was very much missed. 4-H families were active every step of the way through the weekend. The 4-H building encompassed crafts, goods, art, demonstrations, plants, and more which were made by the 4-H members. Over the past year, 4-Hers were given ample time to experiment with new projects which could be seen in the building. The livestock area was always busy in educating the public and showing animals in the arena. Livestock from goats, sheep, pigs, cows, and chickens could be visited at the fair.

The local community was very supportive in the 4-H efforts and as always are very much appreciated by the program. A cake auction occurred on Friday, September the 24th, at the fair where the public could buy cakes made and displayed by 4-Hers. Events like these make our program possible and show the genuine goodness that can come from a benevolent community. The weekend was a huge relief to many because we can see our county really transform back to the familiar locale that we have been missing.

In other 4-H news, since the last update we have continued club meetings, rifle practices, and extra fair preparations. The clubs put together booths for endorsing our program in the 4-H building and also floats that were displayed in the parade. Some incredible floats included a demolition derby truck that the kids rode on and another equine centered club rode their horses, which some later competed with in the horse shows.

The public speaking contest had online submissions with the extemporaneous speech being presented live on October 1st over

zoom. Those who win Grand Champion or Reserve Champion are encouraged to compete in the State level competition.

The Maryland 4-H State Council is holding an open house on October 14th on zoom to play games with the current council members and receive information about joining the council in 2022. The council is focused on arranging major projects to benefit the State and connecting counties throughout Maryland with 4-H.

The past two months have been very exciting for 4-H but now fall has arrived and offers an opportunity for relaxing and connecting with friends and family. So until next time, stay safe and healthy, and happy fall!

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The Month of December 2021

Hello again all! December has arrived, and that means the holiday season is at its peak! Holiday lights are appearing all around the county, temperatures are dropping again, and kids are preparing for their long winter break. And that includes the 4-H youth of the local St. Mary's County 4-H clubs. This month marks the last of the year! It's absolutely crazy to think that 2022 begins in less than a month, it seems as though 2021 has swept by so quickly. Which reminds us that we must value every moment we are given, because life moves pretty quickly. An inspiring character once said, "If you don't stop and look around every once in a while, you could miss it."

In the last two months, 4-H has rounded up their year in some fun activities. The Maryland State Council held an open house day to encourage members from all around the state to join their program. This open house was held virtually on October 14th. The event distributed information about the council and how to join. The 2022 Maryland 4-H State Council General Membership Applications were accepted until November 30th. If you or anyone you may know are interested in working with youth throughout the year to help better the community and learn helpful life skills, state council is a great program to expand connections and gain experience. More information can be found on the social media pages for the council, or by contacting your local 4-H educator.

Applications from senior 4-Hers to serve as delegates in leadership conferences are being accepted until January 15th. These conferences include the National 4-H Congress, the National Leadership Conference at Camp Miniwanca, the Virginia 4-H Congress, and West Virginia Older Members' Conference. Those who are interested in the program must be between the ages of 14-18 (by January 1st), must be enrolled in the 4-H program, and must travel to complete the Delegate interview. Senior 4-H members are allowed to serve as Delegates for a total of three leadership trips in total through their 4-H career, and may attend each leadership trip only once. These conferences give members the chance to represent their counties and offer valuable input to improve the 4-H program. In 4-H, we always aspire 'to make the best better'.

The Tudor Hall 4-H club held a Holiday workshop available to all 4-H clubs in St. Mary's County on December 11th. This workshop provided a chance for the 4-H community to join together and celebrate the holiday season by making crafts and gifts. A prize was even awarded to the person with the most

festive attire. In 4-H, we really know how to encourage the holiday spirit. We couldn't be more excited to welcome Christmas and the New Year.

The upcoming new year also means that club officer positions were re-assigned. For each club, at the December meeting, the current officers are asked to explain their position to the club. These officer positions range from President to Sargent of Arms. No matter your age or experience, there is always a position that would fit you. Skills range from the President, who arranges the agenda and leads the meetings, to reporter and secretary who document the activities covered at each meeting, to treasurer who allocates and manages the club's money, and even the Sergeant of Arms who ensures that everyone is active and focused during meetings. Each club will review the positions and nominate 4-H members who would be fit for the job. At the end of the year, elections will take place that allow the nominees to promote their ability to hold a position.

After elections are held, clubs will complete activities and socialize to enjoy the holidays with friends. Some clubs participate in Secret Santa, for example, which is a fun way of exchanging gifts with other members anonymously. This is a great time to practice old traditions and create new ones in this crazy time! We would also like to thank Christine Allred for her valuable time and effort as our 4-H educator! We can not express enough gratitude for all that she has done for us! From everyone at 4-H, we hope you have a wonderful holiday season and have a great start to your new year!