



Virginia 4-H Alumni and Friends Newsletter



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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250
NATIONAL 4-H WEEK
October 1-7, 2023

By the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States of America
A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, this year's National 4-H Week theme, "I ♥ 4-H," reminds us that every child has valuable strengths and real influence to improve the world around us; and

WHEREAS, for 120 years, 4-H has served America's young people to make the best better, and is now the Nation's largest youth development organization; and

WHEREAS, 4-H programs are delivered by Cooperative Extension—a community of more than 100 public universities across the Nation—that provide experiences for young people to learn by doing; and

WHEREAS, 4-H connects young people and adults to their communities, preparing them for work and life through experiential and inquiry-based learning while providing emerging research for positive youth development; and

WHEREAS, expanding from its strong agricultural roots, 4-H helps young people explore the world around them and grow into productive adults;

WHEREAS, supporting future leaders in science, agriculture and community leadership is important for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture 4-H program; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, THOMAS J. VILSACK, United States Secretary of Agriculture, do hereby proclaim October 1 through October 7, 2023, as **National 4-H Week**, and call upon all Americans to learn more about and celebrate the 4-H program with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 28th day of September 2023, the two-hundred forty-seventh year of the Independence of the United States of America.

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

MAKE THRIVE GROW SERVE

It's National 4-H Week!

More than a feeling, 4-H provides empowering experiences that create confidence and foster a sense of real belonging for kids in Virginia. Be a part of something bigger.

Happy National #4HWeek!

Download a free virtual background or image here.



Join our Virginia 4-H Alumni and Friends Network

We are forming the Virginia 4-H Alumni and Friends network. Stay connected about upcoming 4-H Alumni and Friends events, statewide 4-H programming efforts, volunteer opportunities and much more. Sign up to receive information from Virginia 4-H.



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4-H YOUNG ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



“4-H keeps giving and makes you fall in love with it all over again”

Paris Woods - Chesterfield County

“4-H keeps giving and makes you fall in love with it all over again,” says Paris Woods, a 4-H Alumni from Chesterfield County. She credits 4-H as the organization that shaped her into the person she is today. Now serving as the Sustainability Lead with the Corporate Social Responsibility team at WorldStrides, Paris reflects on her journey and expresses gratitude to 4-H for kindling her passion for lifelong learning, fostering her willingness to try new things, and nurturing her understanding that everyone has a unique story.

At the age of 9, Woods eagerly embarked on her first 4-H experience at a summer camp held at the Jamestown 4-H Educational Center. She immediately fell in love with 4-H, drawn to the camaraderie and the opportunities it provided to explore new endeavors. The 4-H camp offered experiences that ignited her interests and passions.

Since her introduction to 4-H, Woods remained engaged as a camper, later becoming a Teen Counselor, and eventually return-

ing as summer staff. As part of the tradition, Alumni Staff members gathered to bestow camp names upon new staff members based on their personalities, personal connections, and character following staff training. Woods received her camp name, “Lux,” from a now dear friend named Stingray. Lux, which means light, perfectly encapsulates her ability to illuminate the lives and spaces of those around her. This name also pays homage to one of Stingray’s favorite anime characters who possessed special abilities to bring light to people’s lives.

Throughout her 4-H journey, she served as the President of the Chesterfield County Teen Club and Southeast District Ambassador, in addition to her role as a Mentor on the State 4-H Cabinet. Woods was also hired as a summer VCE Intern with our Chesterfield office in 2020 and made significant contributions in that role. Her 4-H Extension Agent, Bethany Eigel, stated, “I think that very much served as a launchpad to YAAC!”



In 2020, Woods’ 4-H journey led her to be selected as one of just eleven young adults in the entire U.S. to serve on the 4-H Young Alumni Advisory Committee (YAAC). In her capacity as a YAAC member, Woods provided her perspective as a young 4-H alum to the National 4-H Council, the Board of Trustees, ECOP (Extension Committee on Organization & Policy), and other supporters of 4-H. Furthermore, she served as a spokesperson for the 4-H brand through various public engagements, including Board of Trustees recruitment and engagement, meetings with current and potential partners, speaking engagements at various events, and acting as a brand ambassador through digital and social media, and potentially media interviews.

Through these experiences and others, Woods’ passion for youth development was ignited. She eagerly anticipated the opportunity to work with the younger generation, helping them realize that they have the freedom to be themselves.

“4-H has taught me that it’s okay to embrace discomfort at times; it’s what shapes your identity. 4-H continually inspires me to lead a more adaptable life, take the time to connect with new people, understand their stories, and explore the world.”



4-H Programming Spotlight Dominican Republic Program



Since its inception in 2006, the Dominican Republic program has allowed for Virginia 4-H High School students to have an opportunity to travel to a Spanish speaking, developing country to interact with their peers. While there for a week, the 4-H'ers work with local Dominican teen partners to conduct an environmental 4-H Day Camp for Dominican children, learn about Dominican culture and food and conduct at least one service project in the local community. Participants are expected to present programs to local groups during the year after they travel.

This grass roots program has provided this experience to 150 Virginia 4-H teens from 13 different counties, 24 Virginia 4-H volunteers, 6 Extension

Agents (including 1 Specialist), 149 Dominican Republic Teens, and 651 Dominican Day campers.

Each year, the group decides on which service project it would like to offer during the Environmental 4-H Day Camp. Some of the activities include:

- Plant landscaping plants as part of a community service day when the local Free Clinic opened up. (This is the Free Clinic in Veron that the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine built and staffs.)
- Mangrove reforestation project by planting mangrove trees at the beach
- Helped Punta Cana/Bavaro Rotary Club paint an elementary school they built in a small village.
- Bought and delivered paint to a small elementary school in a village where the program was donating school supplies. This program discovered the need when they got there to donate the supplies, so they went to a store and purchased paint with money that Virginia 4-H teens donated on the spot.
- Every year they bring donated school supplies with them to give to several small schools in the villages around Punta Cana
- In 2023 they brought Spanish and simple English books to donate to a new elementary school in one of the villages. They had a library in their school but no books.
- For many years they have organized and conducted a community trash pick-up/recycling day in the village of Domingo Maiz, where many of our Dominican 4-H Day Campers come from. The Dominican kids are introduced to community service and work with the Virginia 4-H'ers to help clean up their little community.
- In 2023 they also donated school supplies to an informal after-school program in Santo Domingo through a contact they made in Punta Cana.

The first year back since 2019, the Dominican Republic Program had a total of 22 Virginia teens and 7 adults in 2023. The program is now in its 15th year and is led by Carol Nansel, 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent in Shenandoah County, and Christine Hodges, 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent in Allegheny County. In 2007, the program received the National World Citizenship in 4-H Youth Development Award from the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents.

The Dominican Republic Program is offered in partnership with the Grupo PuntaCana Foundation, Center for Sustainability and Biodiversity, of which Virginia Tech is a research partner.

To read more about the program, please check out their blog at the [Dominican Republic Blog Spot](#). You can also see pictures from the trips on their [Picture Page](#).



"This program allows me to teach children about ways to help their communities and the world be a better place"
~ Emma Lucero, Montgomery County

"I value opportunities for travel and am interested in the opportunity this program brings to learn more about sustainability and playing a role in promoting it in a community"
~ Journey Mason, Henrico County



IMPACT OF THE 4-H CAMPING SEASON

"The 2023 Jr. Camping season saw a 13% increase across the state in camp participation. Camp participation provides a safe environment that fosters resilience and builds self-confidence therefore strengthening the overall mental health and wellbeing of campers."

*~ Sam Fisher,
Virginia 4-H Camping Specialist*

Inspire the Next Generation - Become a 4-H Camp Volunteer!

Share your Talents!

You can share your expertise to provide young people with learning opportunities as varied as rocketry, GPS mapping, public speaking, agricultural science, photography, community service, and so much more.

Using research-based 4-H project curriculum, you will have the resources to learn as you teach. Either way, you will have the support you need from your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office.

Share your Time!

Volunteers are essential to help youth make the most of these learning opportunities.

According to research, youth who are provided with positive adult interactions grow to become strong, confident young adults

In 2023, Virginia 4-H Camps saw a 13% increase from just over one-year ago. Over 9,200 youth across the Commonwealth participated in one of the week-long overnight camping programs offered by one of the six 4-H Educational Centers.

For many, their first 4-H experience comes from the Junior Camping program. This first-time experience often leads the youth to further explore all of the opportunities that 4-H has to offer, from agriculture, civic engagement/leadership, healthy living and STEM.

4-H was founded on the belief that when kids are empowered to pursue their passions and chart their own courses, their skills grow and take shape, helping them to become true leaders in their lives, careers and communities.

4-H is grounded in a deliberate, research-backed development and delivery model, which means at 4-H camp, kids learn critical life skills like resilience and independence. If we want our kids to be able to bounce back from adversity, stress, challenges and failures, teaching them resilience is key. Having experiences outside their comfort zones help young people become more resilient, more independent and better able to plan and reach their long-term goals.



UPCOMING 4-H EVENTS FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

January 24, 2024

4-H Day at the Capitol

January 25, 2024

An Evening with Virginia 4-H

SAVE THE DATE:

March 13 - 17, 2024

2024 Ignite by 4-H

Follow us on Social Media!



500K+

Over a half MILLION volunteers support the 4-H youth development mission.



You are more than just a volunteer in 4-H — you are instrumental in inspiring the next generation.

4-H programs look to volunteers to help our young people learn the skills they need to prepare for their futures while also having fun!

Volunteers worked with Virginia youth — helping them learn by doing. In 4-H, you can help youth have opportunities to master life challenges, cultivate independence with guidance from caring adults, gain a sense of belonging within a positive group, and share a spirit of generosity with others.

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech. • Virginia State University



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