



STATE 4-H CONGRESS 2026

General Information Packet

June 16-19, 2026

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact the State 4-H Office, at 540-231-6372/TDD* during business hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University



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MISSION OF VIRGINIA 4-H STATE CONGRESS

The mission of Virginia 4-H State Congress is to provide competitive and non-competitive educational experiences to Virginia teens and the adults who work with them, helping them to develop life skills and leadership abilities to become contributing citizens in their communities.

GOALS OF VIRGINIA 4-H STATE CONGRESS

1. Provide a high-quality educational experience for 4-H youth ages 14-18;
2. Promote 4-H as a major statewide educational youth program;
3. Provide educational, recreational, and social experiences for youth that would not normally be available at the unit or district level;
4. Enhance skill development through all 4-H Congress activities including Competitions, Hands-on Workshops, and career exploration projects;
5. Recognize all competition and award winners in front of their peers at a Statewide event;
6. Recognize the support of volunteer adult 4-H leaders that support 4-H Congress;
7. Promote an understanding of the value of diversity among Congress participants;
8. Enhance the delegate's sense of personal and social responsibility through an environment that fosters independence, accountability, decision-making, and time management.

2026 PROGRAM INFORMATION AND HIGHLIGHTS

4-H STATE COMPETITIONS: 4-H members have a chance to compete with their peers from across the state. Please review the policy and guidelines found in this packet. Participants with high scores in each blue-ribbon category will be recognized during the closing ceremony on Friday, June 19, 2026. Please see the competition information for more details.

PRE-CONGRESS ACTIVITY: Upon arrival, units and their chaperones can participate in a self-guided campus scavenger hunt after settling into the dorms. The State 4-H Office will provide all materials for the scavenger hunt. This will be a great activity to familiarize yourself and your delegation with the areas of campus we will be visiting throughout Congress.

WELCOME TO CONGRESS MIXER! On Tuesday, you can enjoy a welcome mixer, which will be held on Dietrick Lawn. This fun time will be hosted by your current State 4-H Cabinet members, along with Meet and Greets by the Congress Cabinet Candidates and 4-H All-Stars. There will be plenty of get-to-know-you activities and fun to go around!

OPENING SESSION: Featuring Clovers and Company, a performing arts troupe from Georgia 4-H!

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS: Delegates will choose from a variety of hands-on workshops during State 4-H Congress, including two 60 minute sessions on Wednesday and one 90 minute session on Thursday. Participants will rank their top five (5) workshop choices, and final assignments will be shared in Congress welcome packets at check-in. A complete list of 2026 workshops is available in this packet and on the Congress website.

BEYOND READY MINI WORKSHOPS: Beyond Ready mini workshops will run concurrently with competitions. These will be rotating sessions that will allow youth to explore a variety of hands-on learning opportunities, leadership skill-builders, and interactive activities to create youth ready for work and ready for life. Participants will move through multiple workshop options, ensuring everyone stays involved, energized, and gains valuable skills.

DANCES: At least one dance will be held. This is another great opportunity for delegates to mingle and meet other Congress participants. Alternate recreation will be available for those delegates who choose not to participate in the dance.

OPPORTUNITY FAIR: At the opportunity fair, participants can discover diverse pathways to participate in 4-H activities, interact with representatives from numerous ambassador groups, and access valuable resources to shape their future endeavors.

COLOR RUN/WALK: Join us for our Color Run/Walk on Wednesday evening. This unique paint race celebrates healthiness, happiness, and individuality. Participants will receive a t-shirt to participate in this event. There will be an additional cost of \$10 to participate in this event and proceeds will help to support the State 4-H Congress.

CONGRESSIONAL GAMES: Congressional Games return this year allowing Districts to compete in both individual and team activities. Points will be awarded in each category to districts based on participation and standing. Tournament style brackets will be utilized, and games may include corn hole, volleyball, 3 on 3 basketball, 4 square, chess and other board games, swimming, and much, much more! Stay tuned for sign up instructions.

4-HALL-STAR TAPPING: During 4-H Congress, current and those who will be tapped into the All Stars will be recognized during a tapping ceremony will be held on Thursday afternoon. The All-Star tapping will be held in an indoor location. **All Congress delegates (youth and adult participants) are expected to attend the All-Star tapping.**

ALL-STAR ORIENTATION: The All-Star orientation will be held on Thursday immediately following the ceremony.

STATE AWARDS AND CLOSING CEREMONY: On Friday morning, State 4-H Congress will close out with a special closing ceremony. This closing ceremony will honor all State 4-H Congress award recipients, including competition winners, 2026 National 4-H Congress delegates, Innovative Programming Awards, Fun Run winners, etc., and installing the 2026-27 State 4-H Cabinet.

CONGRESS DELEGATION PHOTO: The entire Congress delegation will come together for a group photo, and more information will be provided when delegates are on-site. The photos of the delegation may be purchased for \$5 each. Delegates must pay for photos in advance through the registration system.

UNIT PHOTOGRAPHS: Unit delegation photos are scheduled for Thursday with more details to follow once delegates arrive on site. Delegates and chaperones will be in semi-formal attire. Each unit will be designated a time slot for their photo. The unit photos may be purchased for \$5 each. Only those participants from the unit that paid for their photo will be provided a copy.

DIGITAL SLIDESHOW: Do you ever wish you could have a copy to take home of the slideshow produced at Congress? Well, now you can! Digital versions of the 2026 Congress Slideshow can be purchased for \$5 each. Links will be distributed after Congress.

REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR DELEGATES AND ADULTS:

Registration will be online only through 4-H Online. All participants must be enrolled 4-H members or adult volunteers. Registration is available through enrolled member family accounts at <https://v2.4honline.com>. Registration will open on March 13, 2026. Registration will close at 11:59 PM on May 15, 2026.

Registration Structure and Fees:

- ☘ Full Congress Registration - \$310/person
 - For both Youth and Adults
 - Includes
 - Lodging for Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights in Air-Conditioned Dorms (double occupancy)
 - 8 meals
 - Breakfast on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
 - Lunch on Wednesday and Thursday
 - Dinner on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday
 - Congress T-Shirt

- ☘ Competition Registration [one-day only] - \$70/person
 - For both Youth and Adults
 - Includes:
 - Congress T-Shirt
 - One meal (lunch in Dietrick Hall on Wednesday)

- ☘ A La Carte Items
 - Color Fun Run/Walk
 - \$10 to participate; proceeds will help support State 4-H Congress
 - Digital Congress Slideshow - \$5
 - Digital Congressional Delegation Photo - \$5
 - Digital Unit Photos - \$5

Payments - All youth and adult delegates will be responsible for their Congress registration payments.

After the registration process, each participant will receive an email confirmation that their registration has been submitted. Once the agent approves the registration, the participant will receive a second email with payment information and options. Participants will have to make payments to local unit offices.

Refunds – All refund requests should come to the State 4-H Office by June 1, 2026.

- If State 4-H Congress is canceled by the state or federal government or us, fees will be fully refunded.
- Refunds will be provided up until June 1, 2026; however, a \$50.00 processing fee will be assessed for all cancellations up until June 1, 2026.
- After June 1, 2026, no refunds will be issued unless:
 - Between 2 weeks before (June 2, 2026) and up to the day of arrival at Congress, if for **Medical Reasons**, youth are not admitted into Congress, a refund minus \$50 will be provided.

Need-based Scholarships – There are a limited number of scholarships available. The final amount and number will be determined based on the number of applicants and need. To apply for a scholarship, please complete the short Google form at <https://forms.gle/T3owjBaoJVQdpzDHA>. Delegates will be required to make a deposit payment of \$200.00 and will receive additional information about the final payment after the selections. If a scholarship is not awarded, the balance of the registration will be required to be paid.

Department of the Air Force Youth 4-H Event Scholarships – The Air Force 4-H Military Partnership Outreach & Support Project for Virginia is providing a limited number of 4-H event scholarships for youth ages 5 to 18 of Air Force-Connected families living in Virginia. These scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Eligible youth may live on or near an installation or live in communities across the state. Scholarships awarded can be used to assist with the cost of participating in Virginia 4-H camping opportunities or State 4-H Congress. The military parent of the youth must currently be serving in one of the following: **Active Duty Air Force/Space Force, Air Force Reserve, or Air National Guard**. Please contact Chad N. Proudfoot, 4-H Organizational Specialist, at CNProudfoot@vt.edu, if you need more information.



**Beyond
Ready**

STATE 4-H AREAS OF COMPETITION

Held at State 4-H Congress. Congress registration (1 day or 4 days) required

Categories may be combined as needed by competition committee to ensure the contest rooms run efficiently

Discussion Meet

Rules can be found at: <https://www.vafb.com/membership-at-work/farmers-in-action/young-farmers>

Extemporaneous Speaking

Fashion Revue-Constructed Garment

Fashion Revue- Purchased Garment

Food Challenge

Presentation – Animal Science – Dairy/Livestock/Poultry/Horse/Camelid/Domestic Food or Fiber Animal

Examples: How to Groom a Horse, Dairy Free Stall Barn Design, How to Shear an Alpaca

Presentation – Animal Science – Pet

Examples: Geckos, Dogs, Cats, Exotic animals

Presentation – Careers, Entrepreneurship, & Economic Education

Examples: How to Start Your Own Business, Careers that Interest Me, How to Budget Money

Presentation – Citizenship and Leadership

Examples: The History of the Constitution, How to Be a Good Citizen in My School, Parliamentary Procedure

Presentation – Food Demonstration (includes food preparation)

Examples: How to Make Chocolate Chip Cookies, How to Preserve Garden Vegetables

Presentation – Food Knowledge

Examples: How to Prevent Foodborne Illness, Cooking Methods for Beef, Gluten Free Recipes

Presentation – Home, Family & Personal Management

Examples: How to Prepare Meals on a Budget, Furniture Upholstery, How to Manage Your Time More Efficiently

Presentation – Natural Resources & Environmental Education –

Examples: Forestry, Wildlife, Conservation, Fisheries, Recycling

Presentation – Nutrition, Health, and/or Fitness

Examples: How to Prepare to Run a 5K, Proper Tooth Care and Hygiene

Presentation – Outdoor Adventure, Sports & Recreation

Examples: Fishing, Hunting, Trapping, How to Dribble a Basketball, Safety Gear for Rock Climbing

Presentation – Communications & Performing Arts

Examples: Ballet, Knowledge presentations about instruments (How to Care for your Violin), HAM radio, How to Give a Presentation

Presentation – Plants, Soils, & Entomology

Examples: The Importance of the Honey Bee, establishing a Community Garden, Amending Soil to Grow Fruit Trees, How to Grow a Plant from a Seed, Understanding Invasive Plant Species

Presentation – Shooting Education

Examples: Understanding Shooting Disciplines, Precision and Accuracy for Hitting the Target, Safety Whistle Commands on the Archery Line

Presentation – Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM Topics)

Examples: Minecraft, Coding, Web Page Design, Gravity, How to Use a 3D Printer, How to Create Effective PowerPoint Presentations

Presentation – Visual & Creative & Constructive Arts

Examples: Tie Dye, Friendship Bracelets, How to Make Paper, Duct Tape Art, How to Compose a Photo, Architecture Styles, How to Use a DSLR camera

Public Speaking

Radio Spot/4-H Promotion

Science Fair Presentation & Display Experiments, Research

Share the Fun – Combination

Share the Fun – Dance

Share the Fun – Drama

Share the Fun – Instrumental

Share the Fun – Variety

Share the Fun – Vocal

Table Setting

2026 State 4-H Congress Competition Policies and Guidelines

This policy document outlines the official rules and expectations for youth participating in 2026 Virginia State 4-H Congress competitive events. All participants, adult volunteers, and 4-H Agents should review these guidelines carefully prior to competition.

1. Participant Responsibility

Participants must review all rules, resource materials, and score sheets with their local 4-H Agent prior to competing at State 4-H Congress.

2. Use of Official State Rules

All state-level contests will use only the rules, score sheets, and materials posted on the official competition webpage. Local and district rules may differ, but units are encouraged to align with state rules to ensure fairness. For contests with a national-level equivalent, participants should review related national rules for potential differences.

3. Age Eligibility

Only senior-level 4-H youth ages 14–19 (as of September 30 of the 4-H year) are eligible to participate in competitions at State 4-H Congress. Mixed-age acts that include members younger than 14 are not eligible.

4. Participation in Qualifying Events

All State Congress competitors must participate in a qualifying contest, which may occur at the unit or district level depending on local practices. Units and districts are encouraged to hold their contests prior to Congress.

5. Competition Categories and Topics

A list of sample topics is provided for reference but does not restrict participant creativity. All entries must clearly fit into one of the designated category areas. Judges and contest managers have final authority. Categories may be combined as needed by the competition committee to ensure the contest room runs efficiently.

6. Scoring System

The Danish Awards System will be used: Blue Ribbon: 90–100; Red Ribbon: 75–89; White Ribbon: 74 and below. The highest-scoring blue ribbon in each category will receive a medal. Modifications have been made for competition categories with scores exceeding 100 points.

7. Single Event Participation Rule

A participant may compete in only one competitive event at State 4-H Congress, even if they qualified in multiple events at earlier levels. This rule helps prevent scheduling conflicts.

8. Share-the-Fun Entry Limits

For Share-the-Fun (STF) contests, each unit may submit one act per STF category.

9. Entries in Other Categories

Except for Share-the-Fun, units may send multiple participants in all other categories (e.g., Public Speaking, Presentations, Fashion Revue). Contest-specific rules determine numbers of teams and team sizes.

10. Consistency of Genre Across Levels

The genre of the project, presentation style, performance type, garment, etc., must remain consistent from unit/district levels to the state contest. Youth may improve or refine their entry based on judge feedback, but cannot change genres.

11. Restrictions for Past State Winners

A youth who earns the overall state winner medal in a category may not compete in that same category again at the state level. They may, however, compete in other categories in future years. Medal winners should not modify an existing project to fit into a new category.

12. Attendance Requirements

While contestants are encouraged to attend the full Virginia 4-H Congress experience, attendance is not mandatory. Youth may register as one-day participants to compete. Pre-registration is required; deadlines will be posted with Congress registration materials.

13. Competitor Presence During Contest

All competitors must remain in the designated competition room or area for the entire duration of their contest. This expectation supports peer learning and encourages sportsmanship.

14. Restrictions on Audience Attendance

Only competitors, room chairs, judges, and approved contest staff or assistants may remain in the competition area. Parents/guardians, Agents, coaches, and other supporters will not be allowed in the contest room. This policy fosters youth independence and mirrors real-world interview and evaluative settings.

Educational Workshops

Wednesday, June 17th and Thursday, June 18th

Delegates will select their workshops in 4-H Online this year during registration. Workshops will be first come, first serve, and once a workshop is filled it will no longer be available in 4-H Online. Delegates will choose workshops for morning session one, morning session two, and afternoon session (if they are not competing).

2026 4-H Congress Workshops

Wed. 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.	Workshop Title	Description
	Balancing Biodiversity: A Game of Invasive Species Management	Join us for an informative workshop on biological invasions. Participants will receive a brief introduction to the impacts of invasive species, pathways of introduction, and common prevention and management techniques, illustrated with examples of famous invasive species. Following the introduction, participants will engage in a hands-on activity to apply what they've learned.
	Beyond the Clover	Ready to level up? Join the Southeast District Ambassadors for a hands-on leadership experience designed for teens who want more — more confidence, more clarity about their future, and more real-world skills they can actually use. Through interactive stations rooted in the four pillars of 4-H, using teamwork and strategic decision making, you'll step into real-life scenarios that challenge you to think critically and consider real life consequences while making smart choices under pressure. The workshop wraps up with a personal vision-board activity to help each student define their next steps as a leader. Walk in unsure. Walk out with direction.
	Beyond the Template	In this hands-on session, teens will explore how to elevate their content creation using one of today's most popular design tools. You'll learn practical tips, tricks, and creative strategies for customizing designs, building visual identity, and creating content that truly stands out. 4-H members and adults will share how they use Canva for everything from social media to school projects, while also highlighting real-world marketing approaches used to promote brands and community programs. Participants will leave with fresh ideas, stronger design confidence, and tools they can use for their brand, their club, and their future.
	Bugs Tell the Story: Stream Health Workshop	Discover how tiny stream bugs can reveal big clues about water quality in this hands-on field workshop at the VT StREAM Lab. Students will collect, sort, and identify macroinvertebrates using the Virginia Save Our Streams method, then use their findings to assess the stream's overall health. They'll also compare specimens from a healthier stream to see how biodiversity changes with water quality. Perfect for curious learners who enjoy science, nature, and outdoor exploration
	Build Your Biome	Join the Northwest District Ambassadors in exploring architecture around the world in this hands-on, interactive workshop!
	Build Your Strength, Boost Your Power!	Get ready to move, stretch, and power up! In this hands-on fitness workshop, teens will learn how to build their own strength-training

		routine using simple, accessible tools—bodyweight exercises, resistance bands, and basic free weights. Participants will practice safe techniques, discover how different exercises support muscle growth, and learn how to design a routine they can confidently complete at home. Alongside strength training, youth will explore a beginner-friendly cardio plan that supports endurance, heart health, and overall wellness. This session focuses on building healthy habits, boosting confidence, and helping teens understand how physical fitness can fit into their everyday lives.
	Consumer Challenge	The 4-H Consumer Decision Making contest is a fun challenge where teens compare products or services, decide which is best, and explain why. Everyone makes purchases, so why not be really good at it? You get to think, solve problems, and show off your smart choices while competing with friends!
	Cool, Calm and Collected: Tools for a Balanced Life	This interactive, beginner-friendly workshop focuses on nurturing social-emotional wellness and building a personal "tranquility toolkit." Participants will explore practical strategies to manage stress and improve self-regulation. The session blends creative DIY projects, like making stress balls with mindfulness techniques including yoga and guided relaxation. By the end of the session, youth will have developed a deeper understanding of their emotions and gained tangible resources to maintain resilience and a sense of calm in their daily lives.
	Drones in Agriculture	Join us for an exciting workshop on drones and their applications in the agriculture industry. Discover how drones are revolutionizing farming practices, from crop monitoring to precision agriculture. Learn about the latest technologies and techniques, and see real-world examples of drones in action. This workshop is perfect for anyone interested in the intersection of technology and agriculture.
	Finding the World's Most Common Animal	In this hands-on workshop, participants will head outdoors in small teams to collect soil samples and bring them back to the lab for nematode extraction using a semi-automatic elutriator. After isolating these tiny creatures—the most abundant animals on Earth—teams will count their finds under microscopes and compare results. Along the way, participants will learn about soil ecology, sampling methods, and the hidden biodiversity beneath our feet.
	Going Pro: The Ins and Outs of Professionalism	Join the Northeast District 4-H Cabinet Ambassadors for an immersive course that covers the nuances of professionalism. With this hands-on workshop you will be able to polish your interpersonal skills in real time to carry with you into your future professional career!
	Hokie Tour	Join the Southwest District Ambassadors/Cabinet members for a walking tour around Virginia Tech Campus. Stop at select destinations that are important to agriculture and the values that Virginia 4-H represents.
	How Discovery Happens: Foundational Skills for the Next Generation of STEM Professionals	In this multi-part, hands-on workshop, high-school students will explore how scientists design rigorous research methods and use specialized tools to answer real scientific questions. Participants will rotate through four interactive stations, including a LEGO activity on research methods, a guided tour of the Discovery Lab's scientific instruments, a demonstration using the fluorescence microscope or

		<p>elemental analyzer, and a pipetting and sample-prep skills lab. Working in small groups, students will gain firsthand experience with authentic research practices and scientific equipment. This workshop is ideal for curious learners eager to see how science happens behind the scenes.</p>
	How Do I Become A Scientist?	<p>As you grow up, you often say I want to be a Doctor, a Horticulturalist, or an Environmental Scientist. But what does it mean to be a scientist? And what type of education is required to become a scientist and have a successful career?</p> <p>In this workshop, students explore what it means to be a scientist and then learn about the education options needed for their career path. Students will begin with a simple hands on soils experiment to begin thinking like a scientist and then complete an interactive quiz about the education options needed such as an Associates, Bachelor's, or Master degree.</p>
	Measuring Aerobic Fitness	<p>This will be a workshop where the participants will learn how to measure aerobic fitness in a laboratory setting. We will show how to use a metabolic cart, how to conduct a fitness test, and how the participants would be able to use and interpret the results.</p>
	Sensory Science: Understanding the How and Why of Food Flavor	<p>Students will be introduced to Food Science through Sensory Evaluation of different foods, exploring how all 5 senses contribute to the flavor of food.</p>
	Share Your Story	<p>This comprehensive workshop engages students' creativity by guiding them in the development of an original story through writing, visual art, acting, dance, and music.</p>
	Soil Health the 4-H Way!	<p>This hands-on session uses the 4-H values of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health to explore the core principles of soil health. Participants will learn how soil functions, why soil resources are limited, and how management decisions shape long-term outcomes through demonstrations like the "Apple as the Earth" activity, rainfall simulators, slake tests, and biodiversity comparisons. Each soil health principle is paired with a 4-H value to help youth connect leadership skills with real-world stewardship. By observing how soils respond under different conditions, teens will build systems-thinking skills and understand the cause-and-effect relationships behind soil management.</p>
	STEM in Sports Field Management	<p>Attendees will discover first-hand how STEM principles are fundamental to making sure Worsham Field looks its best for Hokies all over the world and plays it's best so that athletes can stay safe as they score on the field! Attendees will learn the Science behind turfgrass management and the Technology that examines the relationships between athlete performance and field safety, the Engineering principles incorporated into professional turf equipment, and the Mathematical knowledge required to maintain high-quality athletic fields.</p>
	STEM Majors in Sustainability,	<p>Environmental careers are often overlooked in STEM, but this session introduces students to high-demand, high-impact fields that urgently</p>

	Environment, & Conservation	need skilled professionals. Students will explore Virginia Tech's top-ranked natural resources programs, learn about environmentally focused STEM majors, and discover career paths with strong job placement and competitive starting salaries. The session includes an interactive careers-and-majors matching activity and practical guidance on how to become a strong applicant to Virginia Tech. It's a great opportunity for students to see exciting STEM futures beyond the traditional paths.
	Technology Teaches Teamwork	Join the Central District Ambassadors for a hands-on Cubelets challenge! Cubelets are small, magnetic robotic blocks that snap together to create working systems. Teens will team up to crack clues, design, and build creative structures using Cubelets. This fast-paced workshop brings teamwork, friendly competition, and strong communication skills to life—all while having a blast!
	The Inside Tract: Cud & Calves	We'll dive into rumination and reproduction of livestock, utilizing real digestive and reproductive tracts to give participants insight into what happens in the inner workings of livestock.
	Virginia Tech Application Workshop	Learn about the Virginia Tech application process and workshop your essays with the Director of Student Recruitment for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.
	VT Helmet Lab: Build-A-Helmet Challenge!	Gear up for a fast-paced, hands-on engineering challenge! After a quick tour of the lab, students will team up in groups of 3–5 to design and build their own protective helmet. Using a helmet shell and a box of padding supplies, each group will compete to create the design that offers the best impact protection. Teams will build, test, rebuild, and retest their helmets as time allows—learning about problem-solving, safety engineering, and the science behind impact absorption along the way.

Wed. 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Workshop Title	Description
	Agribusiness is Everybody's Business	Most people, when they hear agriculture, think of farming. However, agriculture is farming and so much more. The wide world of agribusiness will be introduced, using the chocolate chip cookie as an example. Career opportunities will be explored.
	Balancing Biodiversity: A Game of Invasive Species Management	Join us for an informative workshop on biological invasions. Participants will receive a brief introduction to the impacts of invasive species, pathways of introduction, and common prevention and management techniques, illustrated with examples of famous invasive species. Following the introduction, participants will engage in a hands-on activity to apply what they've learned.
	Beyond the Clover	Ready to level up? Join the Southeast District Ambassadors for a hands-on leadership experience designed for teens who want more — more confidence, more clarity about their future, and more real-world skills they can actually use. Through interactive stations rooted in the four pillars of 4-H, using teamwork and strategic decision making, you'll step into real-life scenarios that challenge you to think critically

		and consider real life consequences while making smart choices under pressure. The workshop wraps up with a personal vision-board activity to help each student define their next steps as a leader. Walk in unsure. Walk out with direction.
	Bugs Tell the Story: Stream Health Workshop	Discover how tiny stream bugs can reveal big clues about water quality in this hands-on field workshop at the VT StREAM Lab. Students will collect, sort, and identify macroinvertebrates using the Virginia Save Our Streams method, then use their findings to assess the stream's overall health. They'll also compare specimens from a healthier stream to see how biodiversity changes with water quality. Perfect for curious learners who enjoy science, nature, and outdoor exploration.
	Build Your Biome	Join the Northwest District Ambassadors in exploring architecture around the world in this hands-on, interactive workshop!
	Consumer Challenge	The 4-H Consumer Decision Making contest is a fun challenge where teens compare products or services, decide which is best, and explain why. Everyone makes purchases, so why not be really good at it? You get to think, solve problems, and show off your smart choices while competing with friends!
	Cool, Calm and Collected: Tools for a Balanced Life	This interactive, beginner-friendly workshop focuses on nurturing social-emotional wellness and building a personal "tranquility toolkit." Participants will explore practical strategies to manage stress and improve self-regulation. The session blends creative DIY projects, like making stress balls with mindfulness techniques including yoga and guided relaxation. By the end of the session, youth will have developed a deeper understanding of their emotions and gained tangible resources to maintain resilience and a sense of calm in their daily lives.
	Drones in Agriculture	Join us for an exciting workshop on drones and their applications in the agriculture industry. Discover how drones are revolutionizing farming practices, from crop monitoring to precision agriculture. Learn about the latest technologies and techniques, and see real-world examples of drones in action. This workshop is perfect for anyone interested in the intersection of technology and agriculture.
	Fun with Flowers!	Create a mason-jar floral arrangement while learning the basics of flower care, handling, and simple design techniques. This hands-on workshop lets teens explore color, creativity, and floral mechanics.
	Going Pro: The Ins and Outs of Professionalism	Join the Northeast District 4-H Cabinet Ambassadors for an immersive course that covers the nuances of professionalism. With this hands-on workshop you will be able to polish your interpersonal skills in real time to carry with you into your future professional career!
	Hokie Tour	We will be walking around Virginia Tech Campus and stopping at select destinations that are important to agriculture and the values that Virginia 4-H represents.
	How Discovery Happens: Foundational Skills for the Next Generation of STEM Professionals	In this multi-part, hands-on workshop, high-school students will explore how scientists design rigorous research methods and use specialized tools to answer real scientific questions. Participants will rotate through four interactive stations, including a LEGO activity on research methods, a guided tour of the Discovery Lab's scientific instruments, a demonstration using the fluorescence microscope or elemental analyzer, and a pipetting and sample-prep skills lab.

		Working in small groups, students will gain firsthand experience with authentic research practices and scientific equipment. This workshop is ideal for curious learners eager to see how science happens behind the scenes.
	Livestock Judging 101	Participants will have the opportunity to learn about livestock judging with real livestock and from actual youth livestock judging competitors. This workshop will be led by Virginia 4-H Youth Livestock Ambassadors and advisors and seeks to give participants insight into why and how youth livestock members do what they do.
	Measuring Aerobic Fitness	This will be a workshop where the participants will learn how to measure aerobic fitness in a laboratory setting. We will show how to use a metabolic cart, how to conduct a fitness test, and how the participants would be able to use and interpret the results.
	Mighty Mung Bean Food Challenge	In this hands-on culinary workshop, students will explore the global importance of mung beans and how this protein-rich legume supports diet diversification and reduces malnutrition in regions such as Senegal. Working in small groups, participants will each have their own workstation and ingredients to prepare a unique mung-bean-based dish, including hummus, fruit salad, egg omelets, or mung bean “caviar.” A brief presentation will introduce the production, utilization, and nutritional value of mung beans before students dive into cooking. By the end, participants will gain both cultural insight and new food-prep skills while discovering creative ways to incorporate mung beans into everyday meals.
	Sensory Science: Understanding the How and Why of Food Flavor	Students will be introduced to Food Science through Sensory Evaluation of different foods, exploring how all 5 senses contribute to the flavor of food.
	Share Your Story	This comprehensive workshop engages students’ creativity by guiding them in the development of an original story through writing, visual art, acting, dance, and music.
	Soil Health the 4-H Way!	This hands-on session uses the 4-H values of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health to explore the core principles of soil health. Participants will learn how soil functions, why soil resources are limited, and how management decisions shape long-term outcomes through demonstrations like the “Apple as the Earth” activity, rainfall simulators, slake tests, and biodiversity comparisons. Each soil health principle is paired with a 4-H value to help youth connect leadership skills with real-world stewardship. By observing how soils respond under different conditions, teens will build systems-thinking skills and understand the cause-and-effect relationships behind soil management.
	STEM in Sports Field Management	Attendees will discover first-hand how STEM principles are fundamental to making sure Worsham Field looks its best for Hokies all over the world and plays it's best so that athletes can stay safe as they score on the field! Attendees will learn the Science behind turfgrass management and the Technology that examines the relationships between athlete performance and field safety, the Engineering principles incorporated into professional turf equipment, and the

		Mathematical knowledge required to maintain high-quality athletic fields.
	STEM Majors in Sustainability, Environment, & Conservation	Environmental careers are often overlooked in STEM, but this session introduces students to high-demand, high-impact fields that urgently need skilled professionals. Students will explore Virginia Tech's top-ranked natural resources programs, learn about environmentally focused STEM majors, and discover career paths with strong job placement and competitive starting salaries. The session includes an interactive careers-and-majors matching activity and practical guidance on how to become a strong applicant to Virginia Tech. It's a great opportunity for students to see exciting STEM futures beyond the traditional paths.
	Technology Teaches Teamwork	Join the Central District Ambassadors for a hands-on Cubelets challenge! Cubelets are small, magnetic robotic blocks that snap together to create working systems. Teens will team up to crack clues, design, and build creative structures using Cubelets. This fast-paced workshop brings teamwork, friendly competition, and strong communication skills to life—all while having a blast!
	The Living Cell Lab	The Living Cell Lab invites participants to explore the hidden world of cellular biology through exciting, hands-on experiments. From extracting real strawberry DNA to modeling animal cells with edible components and examining tissues under a microscope, learners discover how cells function and why they matter.
	Virginia Tech Application Workshop	Learn about the Virginia Tech application process and workshop your essays with the Director of Student Recruitment for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.
	VT Helmet Lab: Build-A-Helmet Challenge!	Gear up for a fast-paced, hands-on engineering challenge! After a quick tour of the lab, students will team up in groups of 3–5 to design and build their own protective helmet. Using a helmet shell and a box of padding supplies, each group will compete to create the design that offers the best impact protection. Teams will build, test, rebuild, and retest their helmets as time allows—learning about problem-solving, safety engineering, and the science behind impact absorption along the way.

Thurs. 9:45 to 11:15 a.m.	Workshop Title	Description
	4-H Bridges Beyond Borders: Dominican Republic Service, Culture & Leadership Abroad	This workshop gives teens a behind-the-scenes look at the Dominican Republic service-learning experience, where youth step into a new culture, build leadership skills, and partner with Dominican teens on community-focused projects. Participants will learn how U.S. and Dominican teens work together to support local initiatives and lead a structured day camp for children. As part of the session, teens will also create handmade bracelets that will be gifted to Dominican youth during the camp. This hands-on activity highlights global citizenship, creativity, and the impact of meaningful cross-cultural connections.
	Abe Lincoln's Top Hat	During this workshop, participants will use images from the

	(and 250 Years of American Stories)	Smithsonian Museum’s Open Access Gallery to explore how objects can tell a story of America. They will work in small groups to select five images that make connections, capture moments, and reflect change. Teams will put these images together to curate their own museum exhibit telling a story of America.
	Applying to be a Virginia 4-H All Star	Youth will learn the qualifications to apply to become a 4-H All Star. Participants will be able to participate in an active "working workshop" to learn how to complete a Virginia All Star application.
	Beginner Swimming	There are several localities in Virginia that do not have safe access to water for youth to learn how to swim. This class will provide an introduction to water, floating, breathing and putting your face in the water.
	Beyond the Barn: 4-H Horse Opportunities	Meet the Virginia 4-H Horse Ambassadors and explore everything the 4-H Horse Program has to offer—from horse shows to exciting equine educational opportunities. After a brief introduction, ambassadors will lead teens through hands-on, interactive activities that bring the horse world to life, no horses required! Participants will rotate through engaging stations such as a horseless horse show, hippology challenges, and a horse-judging experience. This workshop is perfect for both seasoned horse lovers and those brand-new to the equine world.
	Cute Clothes, Clean Conscience: How Fast Fashion Affects the Environment	Fast fashion is a term that describes cheap, low-quality clothing items that are sold to consumers who are looking for deals and to be part of the latest trends, in today’s current environment many teens are shopping on TEMU or SHEIN to find these alternatives. While these can be economical in the short-term, in the long-term these clothing items don’t last and fall out of fashion quickly. Additionally, the cycle of buying and discarding creates an environmental problem as many of our landfills are full of textile waste. Participants will discover practical ways to make more sustainable clothing decisions and try a hands-on activity to put those ideas into practice. By the end, they’ll feel empowered to choose fashion that reflects both their values and their personal comfort.
	Discovering the Science in Dairy Science	Hey, there’s more to that glass of milk than meets the eye! In this workshop, participants will explore the science behind many of the processes that take place on the dairy farm and in milk processing. There will be plenty of hands-on activities allowing you to learn about the biology of the dairy cow and what makes her so special. Learn about milking procedures, milk safety, and cheesemaking.
	Duct Tape & Diapers: How to protect a horse’s sore hoof!	Lameness is a frequent problem in horses and sometimes lameness can be caused by hoof problems. Participants will learn and practice skills that they might use if their horse is lame such as measuring for a boot, applying a boot, and hoof wraps. Tips and tricks will be discussed for common problems such as boots causing rubs and hoof wraps that keep coming off. While this presentation will focus on horse hooves, these principles can apply to other animal species as well.
	Exploring the Agricultural Technology Program	Discover Virginia Tech’s 2-Year Agricultural Technology Program—a hands-on, career-focused path into agriculture, landscaping, and turfgrass management. Explore interest areas like agribusiness, crop

	at Virginia Tech	and livestock production, landscape management, and turfgrass through interactive activities and a plant-propagation project. Participants will tour the Hahn Horticulture Garden to see real student work and learn how to navigate the application process. Join us to explore your passions, build practical skills, and jump-start your future in the green industries!
	From Ideas to Action: Youth Leading Food Security Solutions	The workshop is an interactive, youth-led leadership experience designed to help 4-H State Congress participants move from awareness to action on community food access. It brings Youth in Action (YIA) winners into a coaching role where they guide participants through a structured process for turning a real community concern into a practical project idea they can implement through 4-H Beyond Ready or Lead the Change projects
	Improving Shelter Dog Welfare using Canine Science	This session will introduce attendees to canine science, especially focused on behavior and welfare. We will discuss the stressors of shelter living and how stress affects behavior, health, and adoptability. After a brief discussion of shelter stress and welfare, participants will work in groups to analyze a shelter-dog profile (e.g., fearful, high-energy, etc.) and design enrichment tailored to that dog's needs. We will give enrichment items to demo dogs and attendees will assess which enrichment items the dogs preferred. Attendees will be able to use their knowledge when providing enrichment to their own dogs or volunteering at local shelters.
	Invisible Clues: Using eDNA to Track Aquatic Life & Protect Virginia Waters	This interactive workshop will introduce 4-H Congress participants to environmental DNA (eDNA) as an exciting, cutting-edge tool for monitoring aquatic ecosystems. Youth will learn how organisms, from fish to amphibians, leave behind tiny traces of DNA in the water, and how scientists use that DNA to detect biodiversity and identify ecological changes. Participants will engage in hands-on water sample collection using field-safe materials, practice simple contamination-aware techniques, and explore real or simulated eDNA results to understand how species presence is detected. Youth will leave with the skills and inspiration to participate in or lead their own community-based environmental monitoring projects.
	Sawdust Energy: Unlocking Your Inner DIY	Teens will learn to measure, cut, drill, and assemble their own wooden photo frame or recipe board in this hands-on workshop. Participants gain confidence with common tools while personalizing their project through sanding, staining, or wood burning. Perfect for beginners and DIY enthusiasts alike, this session blends creativity, skill-building, and fun—everyone leaves with a finished piece they built themselves!
	Social Innovation Design Challenge	Students will learn about and practice the 5-step design thinking process and investor-style, lean canvas pitch used by social entrepreneurs to solve real-world problems in their communities.
	Storyboards: Exploring Personal and Family Narratives	This interactive workshop invites teens to explore how personal and family stories shape their identity, values, and perspectives. Through guided reflection and creative storyboard design, participants will uncover meaningful moments, cultural influences, and community lessons that guide their choices. Youth will practice communicating their stories with confidence while gaining a deeper understanding of what shapes how they show up in the world. It's a reflective, creative

		experience designed to help teens connect with their roots and express their authentic voice.
	Tracks to Trees: Exploring Wildlife Identification & Habitat Management through 4-H WHEP	Explore wildlife up close through hands-on ID stations, teamwork-based habitat management challenges, and a fun wildlife knowledge game. Teens will learn how to identify animals, understand habitat needs, and create simple management plans just like real wildlife biologists!
	VT Helmet Lab: Build-A-Helmet Challenge!	Gear up for a fast-paced, hands-on engineering challenge! After a quick tour of the lab, students will team up in groups of 3–5 to design and build their own protective helmet. Using a helmet shell and a box of padding supplies, each group will compete to create the design that offers the best impact protection. Teams will build, test, rebuild, and retest their helmets as time allows—learning about problem-solving, safety engineering, and the science behind impact absorption along the way.
	Who's Sprouting Who?	"Who's Sprouting Who?" is a hands-on 4-H workshop where youth explore the science of growing microgreens in urban spaces, while developing leadership and healthy living skills. Participants will learn how to plant, care for, and harvest microgreens. Along the way, they'll discover the nutritional benefits of microgreens, explore food systems in urban settings. This engaging activity blends science, sustainability, and youth empowerment right from the windowsill.
	Wool to Wear	Ever wondered how a sheep's fleece becomes the cozy sweater you wear? In this hands-on workshop, we'll explore the journey of wool from farm to fiber to finished project. Participants will learn about sheep, wool processing, and the incredible versatility of natural fibers before trying their hand at creating something wearable. You'll get an introduction to knitting, crochet, and/or loom knitting while making a simple project you can take home. No experience needed, just curiosity and creativity!



CHARACTER COUNTS!® at Congress

TRUSTWORTHINESS, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, FAIRNESS, CARING, AND CITIZENSHIP —

these six core ethical values, which the CHARACTER COUNTS!® program calls "Pillars of Character," provides the basis for what Virginia 4-H stands for and what each member, leader and staff member should strive to practice.

These six Pillars should guide all Congress participants' thoughts and conduct. These core beliefs help us to distinguish right from wrong. Additionally, the principles represented by these six pillars act as filters to make decisions. So, being trustworthy is not enough — we must also be caring. Adhering to the letter of the law is not enough — we must accept responsibility for our actions. In holding others to be accountable - we must not forget to be compassionate.

Character really does count! In personal relationships, at school, at the workplace, at 4-H Congress – in life – who you are makes a difference. Character is neither hereditary nor develops automatically; you must consciously develop it.

So, while you are at the State 4-H Congress and even after you leave, put your head, heart, hands, and health into living by the Six Pillars of Character® and the principles they represent.

• Trustworthiness

- Be honest
- Keep promises
- Be loyal

• Caring

- Be kind
- Express gratitude
- Forgive others

• Respect

- Follow the Golden Rule
- Be tolerant of differences
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements

• Fairness

- Play by the rules
- Take turns and share
- Be open-minded

• Citizenship

- Obey laws and rules
- Respect authority
- Protect the environment

• Responsibility

- Do what you are supposed to do
- Pursue excellence
- Be self-disciplined

CHARACTER COUNTS!® is a service mark of the CHARACTER COUNTS!® Coalition, a project of The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University.

VIRGINIA 4-H CONGRESS CODE OF CONDUCT

PURPOSE

The purpose of the 4-H program is positive development of youth. We believe in creating a safe learning environment that encourages the four-fold development of a young person (i.e., Head, Heart, Hands, and Health). We expect all persons involved in 4-H (youth members, parents, teen/adult volunteers) to practice behaviors that foster the total development of youth. Each 4-H member and associated individuals participating in 4-H activities must accept the responsibility of creating a positive image that reflects 4-H ideals. Furthermore, the Virginia 4-H program recognizes that “CHARACTER COUNTS!” All 4-H participants should always strive to uphold the 6 Pillars of Character as described on the previous page. In seeking uniformity in the conduct expected at 4-H programs/events, the following code of conduct has been developed to provide a clear understanding of expectations.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. For the safety and wellness of all participants, a completed and signed 4-H Health History Report Form is required for participation in 4-H events. Any medication used by delegates and/or adults must comply with the [Medication Protocol](#) below for Congress.
2. Participants should attend and be actively involved in all scheduled activities as part of this 4-H program/event (unless under the supervision of a medical staff person). Curfew is to be followed as specified in the schedule for overnight events. Failure to be in assigned locations may lead to dismissal from the 4-H event. Some areas are off-limits to participants (ex: swimming pool; bodies of water such as lakes and rivers; challenge course, etc.) unless under appropriate instructor supervision. **(For Congress, teen and adult delegates are required to attend all scheduled programs, events, and activities. In addition, Congress delegates must be present for each evening's unit meeting in the dormitory with the supervising agent/volunteer by the time specified in the Congress program.)**
3. Visitors to a 4-H program/event must check in with Congress Headquarters upon arrival.
4. Participants are expected to remain at Congress through its scheduled conclusion. If a delegate must leave early, they may not leave until released through Congress Headquarters according to its procedures. Delegate's chaperones and Congress Headquarters must always be involved when a delegate leaves or returns to Congress. Participants may only be picked up from a 4-H program/event by the person designated on the 4-H Health History form. Identification may be requested at the time of pick-up.
5. Participants are expected to follow the directions of 4-H volunteers and paid staff. All 4-H'ers are under the supervision of the Extension Agent, Program Director, or other adult 4-H leader responsible for the 4-H program/event.
6. Participants should respect the property of others and be responsible for themselves. Deliberate destruction or removal of facilities or equipment is not permitted. Financial responsibility for any damages caused by deliberate destruction will be assumed by the participant and/or parents/guardians. The same applies to the property and personal items of other participants.

7. Participants should treat all others and themselves with respect. Aggressive, abusive, vulgar, or violent language and behavior towards others (ex: fighting, threats, insults, cursing, discrimination, etc.) are not permitted.
8. Participants should respect the privacy of others. Girls are not permitted in boys' lodging rooms nor are boys permitted in girls' lodging rooms. **(For Congress, females are not allowed to visit male sleeping rooms or areas designated for male occupancy, and males are not allowed in female sleeping rooms or areas designated for female occupancy.)**
9. Possession, distribution, or use of fireworks, weapons, knives, or other items that can be used as a weapon are not permitted at 4-H programs/events, except under adult supervision in scheduled instructional activities (ex: shooting education class supervised by a certified instructor, etc.).
10. Possession, distribution, or use of alcoholic beverages, marijuana, illegal drugs, tobacco products, and unauthorized prescription drugs are not allowed at any 4-H sponsored program/event and must be reported to law enforcement. The Virginia 4-H program reserves the right to conduct a search of a participant's outer clothing, luggage, personal belongings, lodging rooms, and furniture being used by a participant(s) if there is "reasonable suspicion" that the participant has drugs, alcohol, or weapons. **(As an official 4-H event, the use of any of these products by youth or adults at Congress is strictly prohibited.)**
11. Animals and pets are not allowed at 4-H programs/events unless needed to accommodate a disability or as part of an organized program, or through specific authorization from Extension Agent, Program Director, or other adult in charge of the 4-H program/event. Animals that are used as part of a 4-H program/event should always be provided with proper care.
12. Electronic and mechanical devices (ex: walkie-talkies, video games, radios, TV's, laptop computers, etc.) are not allowed at 4-H programs/events unless they are needed as part of an organized 4-H program/event, or with authorization from the Extension Agent, Program Director, or other adult in charge of the 4-H program/event. Without authorization, these items will be confiscated and returned to the participant (or the participants' parents/guardians) at the end of the program/event. **(During State 4-H Congress, youth may be permitted to carry their cellular phones with them, but they must be turned off and not in use during any group sessions.)**
13. During Congress, teens are not allowed to drive their personal vehicles. All vehicles are to be parked in parking lot(s).
14. Suggestive dancing is NOT appropriate at 4-H Congress

DRESS CODE

Participants are expected to dress appropriately based upon the **Virginia 4-H Congress Dress Code** as outlined below. All delegates will dress neatly and appropriately for the scheduled activities.

Dress Code Examples

- **Sport** – shorts and tee-shirts
- **Casual** – polo shirts, t-shirts, casual shirts, slacks, nice jeans or shorts or skirts.
- **Professional** – shirt and tie, dressy top, khaki or dress pant, skirts, suits, dresses.
- **Semi-formal** – suit or jacket/nice pants, shirt and tie, party dress (long or short), dressy top with dress pants or skirt.

Additional Dress and Appearance Guidelines

- Clothing with negative, indecent language or symbols is prohibited.
- Clothing should not be excessively tight or short. As a guide, mid-thigh length clothing is appropriate.
- Clothing with holes, tears or slashes on the torso area should not be worn (lower pant legs is O.K.)
- All tops must have at minimum 2-inch straps and cover the full torso.
- See through clothing is prohibited.
- Any adornment that could be perceived as or used as a weapon will not be allowed.
- Religious head coverings are the only headwear allowed indoors.

CONSEQUENCES

Unacceptable behavior during a 4-H program/event (as defined within this Code of Conduct or through a review process by 4-H staff/volunteer) will result in consequences to the participant. Consequences may include:

1. Early release from this 4-H program/event without refund, (for Congress, teens and adults who choose not to abide by the 4-H Code of Conduct will be subject to early release from Congress and will be required to return any scholarship money awarded to them),
2. Restitution or repayment of damages,
3. Denial of future participation in the 4-H program/event at the local, district, state and national levels for one or more years (as determined by the unit staff in charge of, or responsible for, the 4-H program/event),
4. Forfeiture of financial support for a 4-H program/event,
5. Removal from 4-H offices held (if applicable), and
6. Releasing the youth to the appropriate law enforcement agency and/or the proper authorities.

NOTE: Any conduct not specifically covered by this Code of Conduct, but deemed inappropriate by those responsible for the 4-H program/event will be viewed as a violation and appropriate action will be taken by the Congress Dean. If an infraction occurs, the person in charge of the 4-H program/event will provide appropriate communication to parents/guardians.

Medication Protocol

- Each delegate is responsible for his/her own prescription medications. Prior to attending congress, discuss any medication needs with your 4-H Agent.
- Should delegates need assistance with medication while at Congress, contact the medical staff.
- Over-the-counter medications (acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, etc.) are available at the Medical Station and therefore, not necessary to bring with you. Refrigeration is available at Congress Headquarters for medications (insulin, etc.).