

Virginia 4-H



INSPIRE KIDS TO DO



Message from Jeremy Johnson, 4-H State Leader

In communities across the Commonwealth, we see youth from all walks of life aspiring for success, but lacking access to opportunities to get there. 4-H has the privilege of filling that gap. Our camps, clubs, and after-school curriculum provide immersive learning about agriculture, civic engagement, healthy living, and STEM. Investing in Virginia 4-H means investing in young people like Olivia Heard, a determined and tenacious Prince William County teen, and Martina Essert, a horse ambassador with journalism dreams she discovered through 4-H. It means investing in the health of our communities through our Health Rocks! program and in spreading coding literacy for 21st century youth. And in doing that and so much more, it means we're providing opportunities for youth to build skills to lead for a lifetime, in every community. 4-H takes pride in our role in the lives of over 217,000 youth who multiply our impact in their communities. We promise to continue providing the opportunities Virginia youth need to become well-rounded, civic-minded, and successful young leaders.



Jeremy Johnson

All the best,
Jeremy Johnson, Associate Director and State 4-H Leader
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Free platform spreads coding principles – and excitement – throughout Southern Virginia

Teaching coding literacy is increasingly critical, but 4-H agents in Southern Virginia found that it can be as simple as opening a web browser.



Gamechangers participant at Day Camp.

GameChangers is a web-based, open-access platform built by a Virginia Tech engineering professor, and is designed to introduce students to coding without immediately immersing them in complex programming languages. The platform allows students to create “game plans” in plain English, have them automatically converted into game code, and watch their ideas take animated form.

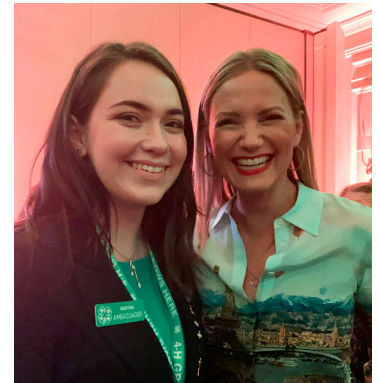
Sponsored by a partnership with National 4-H and Microsoft, Mecklenburg County 4-H agent Jennifer Bowen partnered with Professor Michael Hsiao to provide GameChangers training for 40 middle and high school teachers and a Charlotte County youth development extension team led by Darla Marks and to bring it to 4-H extracurricular programs.

Combined, over 200 students have explored coding principles through GameChangers in the past two years – and the reception has been astounding. A game design contest in Mecklenburg spurred 140 entries, surpassing expectations.

Because of the mentorship 4-H agents have provided through the game, students' computational thinking has dramatically increased – thereby increasing their chances for success in solving 21st century problems and opening up a new career pathway.

Nine years of 4-H turns shy equestrian into confident young adult

Eighteen-year-old Martina Essert from Chesapeake has been in 4-H since she was nine. What started as a social opportunity for the shy, homeschooled horse rider snowballed into exposure to new opportunities in other fields and a subsequent laundry



Martina Essert with Jennifer Nettles, 4-H Alum and lead vocalist of Sugarland at the National 4-H Legacy Awards

list of accomplishments: she's one of 12 Virginia 4-H Horse Ambassadors, president of her local club, a representative on the State 4-H Cabinet, and a green-carpet correspondent for the 4-H Legacy Awards.

While producing awards show content, she met and interviewed 4-H alumni like Olympic medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey, President and CEO of National 4-H Council Jennifer Sirangelo, Parks and Recreation star Aubrey Plaza, and Sugarland frontwoman Jennifer Nettles.

The confidence required for her endeavors and the opportunities for exposure to entirely new fields, Essert said, comes directly from 4-H. Through her involvement, Essert discovered where her strengths lie. Because of that, she aims to “spread the positivity and confidence” that 4-H gave her through a career in journalism and communications, sharing “stories of people who might not have been as confident or as privileged,” she said.

4X

more likely to actively contribute to their communities

2X

more likely to participate in STEM activities in out-of-school time

2X

more likely to make healthier choices

Resilient Prince William County teen forges engaged life through 4-H

For Olivia Heard, life before 4-H was insulated. She'd go to school dances only to retreat to the company of her phone. In conversations with strangers, she'd silently nod along. She kept to a close circle of friends and was afraid to venture past her comfort zone.

But Heard was determined to come out of her shell. That's when she joined her local 4-H group, a science-focused and tight-knit club of five total members.

The Prince William County teen opened up and pushed herself to be more engaged, even when it didn't go as planned. She ran for State Cabinet twice, but didn't land the position. Still Heard persevered, determined to be actively involved in 4-H. "I just kept looking at the big picture that I can still help in my own ways in 4-H without being in cabinet," Heard said.

She jumped into volunteering, competed in singing competitions and a food challenge, and started a 4-H fencing project. Heard's determination was noticed: this year, she was selected to represent Virginia 4-H at the upcoming National 4-H Congress.

The 17-year-old graduated high school early and now helps Prince William County elementary and middle school students with their schoolwork and plans to teach after-school fencing classes this fall. She's applying to be a 4-H camp staffer and continuing to explore her interests and her passion for volunteering.

"I want to try and help out people the way 4-H has helped me," Heard said.



Olivia Heard

Substance-prevention program reaches thousands in Virginia communities

It takes a village to prevent and reduce tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. That's the mentality behind Health Rocks!, a statewide 4-H Healthy Living program targeting young people ages 8 to 14.

4-H agents spread the program via school curriculum, extracurricular activities, mentoring, and partnerships with local organizations — reaching youth, their families, and the community at large through custom programming. For many students, the program is the first opportunity they've had to talk openly about how substance use affects them and to practice ethical decision-making skills for opting-in to a healthier life.

Agent Brian Hairston implemented the program in Henry County and Martinsville nine years ago. It now reaches around 1,500 students each month. In Carroll County, agent Jonette Mungo spent the past two years implementing Health Rocks! programming in nearly every school — reaching around 1,200 students each year — and is working with local police and churches to create a focused task force to holistically treat the area's opioid addictions.



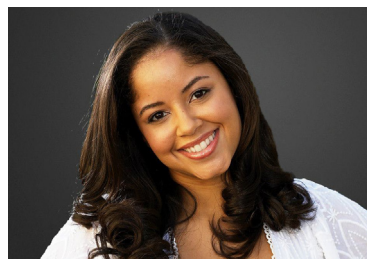
Participant of the health rocks programming

Notable Martinsville 4-H alumna wins Emerald Award

She's a New York Times bestselling author. A Harvard grad with honors. Former Miss Virginia and top 10 at Miss America. A talk show host. Even a Who Wants to be a Millionaire winner.

But before it all, Nancy Redd was a Virginia 4-H member. The National 4-H Luminary has championed 4-H ever since: donating a portion of her Millionaire winnings to her local chapter in Martinsville, promoting 4-H as her Miss Virginia platform, helping facilitate a \$1 million partnership between 4-H and Molina Healthcare, becoming a 4-H mom, and more.

For her outstanding and sustained commitment to the youth of Virginia, Redd has been named the first recipient of the Virginia 4-H Emerald Award. Watch her acceptance speech via <http://bit.ly/2xjBzo8>.



Nancy Redd



217,964

young people — and counting — participate in Virginia 4-H youth programs



108

counties and cities served, with 6 4-H educational centers throughout the state



15,822

adult and youth volunteers



27.4%

of 4-H youth participate from under-represented groups



SAVE THE DATE

100TH

VIRGINIA 4-H CONGRESS
JUNE 22-25, 2020



EMPOWER VIRGINIA YOUTH TO MOVE FORWARD IN LIFE WITH ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP & LIFE SKILLS THEY BUILD ON THEIR 4-H JOURNEY

To give text 4H to 51555 or visit give.vt.edu/4h

- Send a kid to camp: **\$350**
- Send a teen to State 4-H Congress: **\$500**
- Send a kid to a national 4-H leadership event: **\$2000**

