This I believe

Sometimes it really pays off to clean out old files in an office. While doing some office cleaning in the Phillips County office, the office secretary stumbled across an old document.

The pages are slightly yellowed, there appear to be stains of some kind on the front page, and a few pages are curled or torn, but the message in this particular document couldn't be more accurate.

The author of the document is unknown. He or she wrote about the continuing youth development which happens in 4-H and wrote this paper, titled, "This I Believe." The following is a summary of the paper and really hits the mark in terms of 4-H and positive youth development.

"The 4-H boys and girls are more important than the 4-H project." 4-Hers enroll in 4-H to learn life skills through the projects they take in 4-H. Youth development also occurs through club meeting participation, fundraising, community pride activities, public speaking opportunities and leadership conferences, just to name a few. The development of the youth into a productive citizen is the goal of 4-H, not the development of the project itself.

"4-H is not trying to replace the home, the church and the school-—only supplement." To be a truly well-rounded individual, youth need to have support and direction from various individuals, groups and other organizations.

To be a truly successful 4-H member will require the support and guidance from parents/guardians, grandparents and other caregivers or family members. 4-H can work hand in hand with the knowledge children are learning every day by providing them an opportunity for hands-on application of that knowledge.

“4-Hers should be their own best exhibit.” 4-H members may get so wrapped up in their project and displaying or showing that project that they forget their own appearance or manners. 4-H works to instill values such as good sportsmanship, gratitude and showing kindness to others.

“No 4-H award is worth sacrificing the reputation of a 4-H member or leader.” While everyone enjoys winning, there usually is only one “winner” in regards to projects displayed at county fair. However, as long as the 4-H member worked hard and learned life lessons by completing the project and participating in 4-H, each member is a winner because of the knowledge and skill gained.

Upholding the high morals and values of the 4-H program will teach young members what the true reward of participating in 4-H really is.

“Competition is a natural human trait and should be recognized as such in 4-H. It should be given no more emphasis than other fundamentals in 4-H.” Competition is everywhere we turn in our American culture. While competition can be a good thing, it also may end up driving youngsters away from the 4-H program.

To truly accomplish the goals of the 4-H program, the “competition” should be within the 4-H member. Can he or she do something better as the result of 4-H participation? If the answer is yes, then the 4-H goals have been achieved.

“Learning how to do the project is more important than the project itself.” 4-H strives to teach young members the skills they will need to be a successful adult. The projects 4-H members enroll in are simply avenues to teach these skills.

“Many things are caught rather than taught.” We all know children are natural mimics of what they see or hear. 4-H leaders are the models for their 4-H club members. Their enthusiasm for projects or club activities is shared by members and other parents.

Some of the most heart-warming 4-H stories are based upon this principle—the leader set the example and the 4-H member copied it.

“A blue ribbon child with a red ribbon pig is more desirable than a red ribbon child and blue ribbon pig.” This is really what 4-H is all about; the development of each youth. The project is simply the vehicle used to teach life lessons and skills. 4-H members develop through the opportunities to make decisions on their own. Sometimes, they may make wrong decisions; however, youngsters will learn from their choices without harsh consequences.

“To ‘learn by doing’ is a fundamental in any sound educational program and characteristic of the 4-H program.” How many of us learn and retain knowledge better when we’re able to experiment “hands-on?”

Learning by doing gives 4-H members direct experience with something new. Because members experienced something, chances are the youngster is more likely to remember it longer and more accurately. 4-H offers many opportunities to “learn by doing.”

“Every member needs to be noticed, to be important, to achieve and to be praised.” 4-H believes in giving members significant recognition such as praise, attention and compliments to let the member know that what he or she has done is worthwhile.

If you have any questions about 4-H, or would like to volunteer for the Phillips County 4-H program, please contact the Phillips County Extension Office at 970-854-3616. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

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