

My 4-H Story

My name is Heidi Sanford, and I have been in 4-H for eight years. I was really young when I joined 4-H and I didn't really understand what it was but, I knew that my dad did it when he was a kid and now, I wanted to be in 4-H just like him. When I finally was able to start putting projects in the county fair, then show pigs, and finally show chickens, I realized what 4-H was. 4-H is not just for showing animals, it is about learning how to become a leader and learning activities and skills that can apply to the rest of your life.

My 4-H club is the Elk Mountain Outlaws, and I have done many fun activities and community service projects with them this year. The main community service we did this year is highway clean up on April 28th, 2024. Our 4-H group picks up garbage along highway 450. Cleaning up the trash shows you how much people litter and makes you want to be better about not littering. It may seem boring to spend over an hour picking up garbage, but it is important to keep our town clean, so it is an enjoyable place to be. Highway cleanup can be really fun if you do it in the right mindset because you are basically going on a long hike and chatting with your friends. We also made blankets for the dogs at humane society. Not only does this benefit the dogs who do not have a home but it can be a skill you can use later in life. If one day you want to make blankets for homeless people or even your kid, you will know how to make a blanket. You can teach others as well that way they can use it for community service too. One of my favorite meetings is always the family fun day. Our 4-H club has made it sort of a tradition to go to the lake and have a barbecue. It is fun to talk about and see what other people are doing for the fair projects and swim all afternoon with your friends. Overall going to 4-H meetings is fun especially when you are doing community service that can be applied to your own life.

Almost every year I enter static exhibits in the county fair this year was no different, this

year I entered three different photography pieces and some snicker doodle cookies. The photos I entered this year were all taken at Yellowstone National Park. I took a picture of a buffalo, the Yellowstone River, and Yellowstone Lake. I love taking pictures and capturing a moment in time that I want to remember when I was on this trip to Yellowstone with my family, I was not specifically taking pictures for fair, but it was in the back of my mind. When I was talking to the judge during my interview, she taught me the rule of thirds which is where your horizon needs to be not in the middle of the photo but either towards the top or towards the bottom. Knowing this I can now take beautiful pictures that can capture moments I want to remember, not just photos for fair. This year I did not know this, but my photos still did well. My buffalo photo got a blue ribbon at the county fair. My lake photo got a purple ribbon at the county fair and a red ribbon at the state fair. My river photo got blue at the county fair and white and state fair. My second static exhibit was snickerdoodle cookies. I absolutely love baking. It is one of my favorite things to do whenever I am bored. This snicker doodle cookie recipe took me forever to get right not because of the ingredients, but because it was hard to tell when to take them out of the oven. When it is time to take them out of the oven, they still looked raw but once you take them out of the oven they still cook a little bit. This year I felt it was finally ready to put them in the fair. They did really well at the county fair they got overall grand champion food exhibit. At the state fair they did fairly well and got a red ribbon. The judge at the state fair said that the texture was off and that it needed more flour. Baking is so fun and can definitely be applied to your life, but I feel like what I learned the most from this experience was that you can always learn something new. I thought that I had gotten my cookie recipe to be perfect, but they were not, and I learn how to fix them. Clearly this year was a good year for my static exhibits.

One of my favorite parts of fair is getting to show my pigs. This year I had two pigs, Twinkie and Lucy. We got them from a local who had bought one of my pigs for breeding a few years back. These pigs were the grandchildren of that pig I sold, and they were so sweet. We got them towards the end of March, and they were born at the beginning of February. The year before, we fed Show Right Pig Feed so we decided to feed it again this year. This year was really easy compared to the last few years none of them got sick or sunburnt. They were on the smaller side so I was scared they were not going to make weight. Because of this we fed them some milk replacer. Luckily both of my pigs made weight. Lucy weighing 212 pounds and Twinkie weighing 202 pounds. Showing my pigs went really good as well. I got fourth place my first year as a senior showman and I am really proud of that. In the market classes, Lucy got first and Twinkie got second. They were really good for showmanship, and I learned a lot this year. I learned how to get them to keep their head up and what responsibilities I have to take on next year to make my pigs the best show pigs they can be. Showing pigs is a great way to learn responsibility which is essential for life. Showing pigs is just another great example of how 4-H can help you become a better person in life.

Finally, my last project and my favorite project is showing chickens. This year we did not buy any new chickens but showing my old chickens was just as fun. This year I brought a lavender orpington hen, a buff orpington hen, a speckled ussex hen, and a pekin duck drake. This year was my first year as a senior showman, so I knew I needed to step up my game. I learned as much as I could about the anatomy of a chicken and looked up questions that a judge would ask me. I did my best to prepare for the show and it paid off. I got Grand Champion Senior showman. My chickens did really well to both of my orpingtons got purple ribbons, my speckled Sussex got a blue ribbon, and my duck got overall reserve champion waterfowl. My chickens are

my pets, and I love showing them but there are a lot of responsibilities that come with them.

Having these responsibilities makes me better able to juggle responsibilities that come with my job and school. Learning about my chickens and studying them are good skills for school and college. Undoubtedly, showing chickens is a good way to learn life skills.

4-H is always going to be a big part of my life. I have learned so much and you can already see it showing up in my life. I do community service at least once a week with my youth group. In this community service I am leading younger kids in lessons. In my job this summer I was leading kids and helping them with crafts and fun activities. I feel this year I have grown so much as a leader not so much in 4-H but because of 4-H. I am learning how to be a leader on my own. I hope that I continue to accomplish my goals and become a bigger leader within 4-H and my community because the whole point of 4-H is to pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health for better living, for my club my community my country and my world.