



March 27, 2020

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Dear 4-H Families, Volunteers, and Supporters,

It's hard to believe that just three weeks ago we were preparing to welcome 1200 volunteers and teens to the annual Ohio 4-H Youth Conference in Columbus. We know much has changed since that time for all of us, but what hasn't changed is the commitment of Ohio's 4-H professionals to the youth in their counties.

I want to update you with information about how the 4-H program is moving forward during this global pandemic. One week ago, county OSU Extension offices temporarily closed to help reduce opportunities for the virus to continue to spread. 4-H professionals and their OSU Extension colleagues worked quickly to transition their materials and resources to be able to continue working from their homes. In just a few short days, they connected with you via email, began offering virtual meetings and regularly updated web sites and social media with current information and resources. I could not be prouder of their willingness to handle this challenge and seek ways in which to keep 4-H programming alive and well.

For many of our families, virtual (or online) meetings seem to be working well, however I recognize it doesn't work for everyone due to accessibility issues in parts of the state. We are continuing to explore options and will share solutions in the next few weeks. In the meantime, there are tip sheets for club leaders with options and ideas for holding virtual club meetings at go.osu.edu/4hadvisorinfo. Keep checking this site, because we will continue to add information to help you.

We know the spread of coronavirus also presents great uncertainty about upcoming 4-H events—Will camps happen this summer? Will we be able to exhibit our projects at fairs? What about project judging? And the answer is that right now, we just don't know. At this point, all 4-H activities, club meetings, events and programs must be held virtually or cancelled until May 15. The situation is dynamic and changes daily, so we will continue to monitor conditions and reevaluate as needed. This ban may need to extend beyond May 15. During this time of unprecedented health concerns, we will work together to keep you updated and informed.

We understand concerns that some fairs may not be able to take place this year due to the global pandemic health emergency. Any decision to cancel a local fair, festival, parade or other large group gatherings will be made by those authorized to protect the health and wellbeing of all Ohioans. 4-H members and their families should consider a number of factors as they make their decisions to purchase 4-H market livestock projects. Risks and rewards must be taken into account. For example, we encourage families to consider their overall available budget, space to care for livestock, availability of alternative markets, availability of local processing, family freezer space, and needs of local food pantries.

OSU Extension and 4-H will continue working together to support our 4-H members, families, volunteers and local partners, including senior fair boards, classroom teachers, and magistrates, as we navigate this health emergency. As Governor DeWine shared earlier this week, we are "in this together Ohio." Thank you for your continued patience and perseverance.

Yours in service to 4-H,

Kirk Blair

Assistant Director, OSU Extension 4-H Youth Development