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**4-H of Monroe County Embraces Volunteer Appreciation Week
Volunteers Honored for Exceptional Service**

April marks the beginning of National Volunteer Appreciation Month, and the Monroe County 4-H Program is excited to shine a spotlight on the activities of their exceptional volunteers. From leading their own clubs to tabling at community events, volunteers have been essential to accomplishing 4-H's strategic goals. The organization is pleased to highlight the contributions of volunteers during National Volunteer Week, April 19 to 25.

There are a number of ways to be a volunteer for Monroe County 4-H. Some people step in to fill roles as organizational club leaders, working with youth on a regular basis. Other valuable volunteers serve on the 4-H Steering Committee or volunteer in the office. Still other volunteers support large events and others support youth as evaluators or by teaching a workshop.

One of the most tried and true ways that volunteers have engaged with 4-H has been starting their own community or school-based clubs. This involves adult volunteers adapting 4-H activities on their own and offering them to a group of youth that they meet with on a regular basis. The contributions of these individuals allow for 4-H members to consistently experience more opportunities to promote belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery on a per-child basis. Club involvement also allows youth to have a safe and supportive environment while they go about their club activities.

4-H often recruits the help of volunteers to ensure that their programs are as effective as they can be. One such program is Mighty Mondays, a monthly offering that allows youth to try their hands at new skills and experiences on a variety of topics, while having a chance to interact with other youth from around the county. The engagement of volunteers allows the program to be delivered safely and effectively and for youth to feel attended to and involved.

Ellen Harp volunteered to help 4-H educators Lori Koenick and Jessica Reid with the November Mighty Monday, which revolved around creativity with apples and pumpkins. "The pumpkin and apple creations Mighty Monday would not have been the same without the fantastic help from Ellen Harp," said Koenick of Harp's involvement. "Her gentle yet

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detailed approach gave youth confidence to learn new skills. We had new participants to 4-H who did not know one another and Ellen made them feel comfortable and welcome."

The Barnes and Noble Book Fair is a fundraiser organized to help support the development of 4-H programs across the county and to engage the public in 4-H learning. The retail bookstore donates a portion of the proceeds from each transaction made with a 4-H coupon, which could be gained by visiting one of the 4-H tables set up in the store. Volunteers staff the tables.

4-H Clubs such as the Westside Science and Nature Explorers, The Hilton Horsemen, Posh Ponies, and Busy Bees all hosted their own tables with activities ranging from a bunny meet-and-greet to making balloon animals to decorating cookies at the café. Friends of 4-H also participated, including Nick Hadad of ROC Animal School who dressed up as a reindeer, April Buckley who played Mrs. Claus, and County Legislator Steve Brew who played Santa Claus. Cornell Cooperative Extension Board members represented the association at the Information Table.

The day was organized by 4-H Educator Jessica Reid who was able to create a fun and engaging event thanks to the contributions of the volunteers she was in contact with. "I would like to give a shout out to all the 4-H parents who have stepped in to volunteer and lend a hand at our programs and events," she said. "We may not always call them "volunteers" by name, but they are a vital part of the core of volunteers that make Monroe County great!"

Another event that has greatly benefitted from the incredible contributions of volunteers is 4-H Expo, in which they join 4-H staff and community partners to provide festive and fun activities for families who attend. Volunteers engage visitors with a myriad of educational activities, such as an energy bike, maple syrup tasting, and environmental awareness.

4-H Expo attracts hundreds of visitors who all experience a wonderful educational excursion because volunteers expand 4-H's capacity to attend to each visitor as well as the 4-H youth.

Without talented 4-H supporters, achieving the culturally significant mission of 4-H would be extremely challenging. "From stepping up to help with IT issues when setting up equipment, to assisting youth with activities at Mighty Monday events, and encouraging 4-H'ers to try new experiences, they help to inspire the younger generation by serving as an example of the volunteer spirit," said Reid of the volunteers that she has worked alongside.

Volunteers are typically seen as the most essential resources available to a nonprofit organization. At 4-H, they are seen as invaluable individuals who contribute to the betterment of society by fostering the positive development of youth in Monroe County. The program would not be able to have the reach it does without the selfless commitment and efforts of its volunteers, and they deserve to be recognized and thoroughly appreciated.

The Monroe County 4-H Program is offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension to the youth of Monroe County. 4-H is a worldwide youth development program open to all youth aged 5 to 19, who want to have fun, learn new skills, and explore the world. In return, youth who participate in 4-H find a supportive environment and opportunities for hands-on or "experiential" learning about things that interest them. Learn more at <http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/4-h-youth-development>.



Photo: 4-H Staff Monroe County Legislator Steve Brew spends time teaching life skills to students at School Without Walls in Rochester.



Photo: 4-H Staff Cornell University students, Karina and Jose, help youth learn about sustainable energy at the 4-H Expo.