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Mary Cariola Students Participate in 4-H Public Presentations Technology and teamwork support student success

4-H Public Presentations are held each year to encourage youth to develop their communication skills. The program supports youth to create a presentation and develop the skills needed to deliver it to an audience.

With public speaking known as one of the biggest fears that people have, it is easy to appreciate that this is a challenging and important project for youth to complete. For a group of youth at Mary Cariola Center, this challenge is magnified as the students are non-verbal and non-ambulatory. However, these youth, and their supporters, meet the challenge head on and succeed! Sean, Maddie, DeAshaney, and Shamell are hard workers and brave to try out and improve an important skill!

A cornerstone of 4-H is to create experiences that all youth can participate in. According to author, Liz Fosslien, "Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice. Belonging is having that voice be heard." Tricia Coleman, Speech Language Pathologist, embraced that quote and set out to make public presentations possible for these students. Access to technology, on-going educational and therapeutic support, motivation and dedication made 4-H Public Presentations a reality for the 4-H Busy Bees. The evolution and adaptation of technology has made communication increasingly more accessible for students with disabilities. All four youth utilize a speech generating device, which involves dynamic technological equipment programmed with communication software to allow access voice output communication. Each system is accessed differently and all programs are customized to meet the needs of each individual.

Moving from the technological aspects of Public Presentations, the youth explored Dream Boards for 2021. The youth organized their thoughts and answered questions on their dream boards that included "What do I want to learn more about?", "What do I like to do with my friends and family?", "What do i want to accomplish this year?", "What will keep my mind and body healthy?", and "Where do I want to go?". Based on the ideas that were gathered, each student created a visual dream board and presented them to both a live as well as a virtual audience for the annual 4-H Public Presentations event.

Two of the youth shared in their planning that they dreamed to be in a fashion show and a live

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concert. A week before the presentation, music and speech therapists collaborated to make those dreams come true. Music Therapist, Jason Willey, was at the ready to support the musical part of the youths' dreams. As the students collaborated to plan their event, entitled "Melodies and Accessories" they used their speech generating devices to select music that would be performed and how each song would be presented. They also co-wrote and recorded an original song to premiere at the event. After they wrote the lyrics to this song, one of the students composed the primary melodic hook on an electric keyboard, and the other student added her own vocal stylings. The event featured modeling accessories and the debut of "Dream It-Be It", the original song composition that highlighted the fact that we can all achieve our dreams just as we are!

Joanne Fisher, Mary Cariola Center Communications Specialist, shares that every Cariola student has goals. The team of educators and clinicians work together to support students to achieve those goals. Using purposeful work, fun, and encouragement, the Mary Cariola Center celebrates all successes as the Center works to transform the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Kathy Lee, classroom teacher and leader of the Busy Bees 4-H Club, shared how much it means to the youth and their families to be able to participate in the 4-H Public Presentations Program. The youth were thrilled with the certificates they earned and loved the 4-H goodie bags they received. Parents loved the bragging rights to share their childrens' success in the public presentations and amazing fashion show.

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 ages 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.

To learn more about Public Presentations and other 4-H programs, visit <http://bit.ly/4hyouthdevelopment>.

