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4-H Magical Outdoor Weekend Youth explore nature

An autumn weekend in September found 4-H youth, volunteers, and educators from across New York State working together to explore the magic of the outdoor world. The event was held at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills just outside of Canandaigua, New York.

Youth learned a variety of skills that would help them appreciate time in the natural world and met like-minded youth from across the state. They participated in team building activities that would help them work together to share their discoveries over the weekend. Cornell Cooperative Extension staff led the youth and adults through these activities to kick off the event. The youth participated in workshops on a variety of topics. These workshops were all related to developing outdoor adventure skills and enjoying time in the outdoors.

The Shelter Building Spells Workshop allowed groups of youth to create shelters that would protect them from the elements. Using natural materials in the woods, including leaves and fallen sticks, youth created different types of lean-to structures while working as a team.

Youth shared that participating in Arcane Archery was a favorite. They were mesmerized by how physics allows an arrow to fly through the air and hit a target. This workshop helps youth to think about using different senses and being in tune with their breathing patterns.

A Flytying Wizardry Class allowed youth to take a few materials and a fish hook and create a fly to be used for fly fishing. Part of the magic of this workshop is the interest of several youth to try their hand at fly fishing in the future.

A workshop titled Trail Tricks allowed youth to explore what and how to pack to spend time out on the trail. This included tips on what and how to pack. Youth participants created first aid kits to carry with them on future adventures.

The Elemental Magic was a fire building workshop that was a big hit. Fire can be created from dried bark, pine needles, small sticks, and one match. It is certainly magical when that is successful.

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Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

A Niagara County 4-H Volunteer traveled to the event to share the magic of insects. In this hands on workshop, youth collected insects for observation and learned how to pin butterflies for 4-H entomology collections. You might see one at a county fair near you next summer!

The weekend concluded with youth working together to create skits that reflected their weekend experience. Working with new friends who took part in varying workshops, they shared about the enchantment of the weekend with each other. In addition, they were able to be creative, and practice life skills including public speaking and working with others.

Youth seemed to thoroughly enjoy their experience at the action packed weekend. A few of the exclamations heard from youth over the weekend included, "That was so cool!", "crawfish!!!!", "I am going to work on an entomology project this year for sure", "Did you know that some tadpoles overwinter in the mud?", "What is that?! I think it is a new species - I'm going to look it up right now!", and "Now that I've learned to tie a fly, I am definitely going to learn to fish".

One parent shared, "My son was so happy to feel included among his peers and participated in all the activities. Of course his most favorites were the smores at the fire pit and the magic show."

Magical Outdoor Adventure Weekend, was coordinated by the Youth in Nature and Outdoor Education Program Work Team. The Program Work Team is a group of Cornell University faculty and staff, extension educators, and external stakeholders who collaborate to identify issues, study needs, and create educational materials. Program Work Team members design learning experiences that address issues and needs. The weekend event was designed to help young people develop outdoor living skills and enjoy spending time in nature.

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 about 4-H at <http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/4-h-youth-development>.



Youth test out their shelter.

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