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**Volunteer Appreciation  
Monroe County 4-H Sparks Conversations To Thank Volunteers**

During National Volunteer Appreciation Week, held in April, the Monroe County 4-H Team gathered volunteers to celebrate all that they bring to youth. To celebrate volunteers, supporters, and partners, Monroe County 4-H said thank you through a Sparking Conversations Volunteer Appreciation Event. Friends of 4-H gathered at the Henrietta Public Library to discuss potential ideas for future programming, ideas for summer experiences, and to improve accessibility through meeting times and locations.

Volunteers are crucial to the success of Monroe County 4-H. Volunteers support 4-H events, such as public presentations and open houses, and serve as club leaders. At the event, volunteers participated in activities which they could bring back to the youth they work with. These included icebreaker and teamwork games as well as different ways to collect ideas so that all voices are heard. In addition to light refreshments, which modeled healthy meeting guidelines, volunteers were thanked with Volunteer Survival Kits for all of their dedication to supporting positive youth development in Monroe County.

Volunteers shared why volunteering is important to them and the youth they work with.

Sabrina Woodhams is a 4-H Leader at Crestwood Children's Center. When asked what she feels is important about 4-H, Sabrina shared, "They learn something new to take with them when they leave Crestwood." Woodhams, works to encourage youth to participate in public presentations and they design beautiful tie dye t-shirts each summer. "It's good that they belong to something. Belonging is important," Sabrina continued.

"4-H inherently brings an incredibly wide variety of learning opportunities for youth," said Theresa Cimino, 4-H Volunteer and former 4-H AmeriCorps VISTA. Theresa continued, "There are programs and opportunities for youth to explore almost any subject matter, including subjects I never would have expected, such as entomology [or] robotics..." Cimino supports youth as a volunteer evaluator and has given feedback to youth at an Easy Bake Oven event as well as Produced in New York.

***Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities***

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.

Kathy Lee is the Club Leader of the Busy Bees 4-H Club at Mary Cariola Center. Kathy has operated a 4-H club for nearly 30 years. Most of the youth in the club are nonverbal and are in wheelchairs. "Over the years, 4-H has given youth opportunities to get out there, to go into the community and do activities that often people don't think a kid in a wheelchair can do," said Kathy Lee. "When you're medically fragile, when you're in a wheelchair, you may not have access to transportation outside of school and home. 4-H has given youth a bigger world."

*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. Learn more at <http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/4-h-youth-development>.*



4-H volunteers and staff enjoyed a wonderful event to celebrate National 4-H Volunteer Appreciation Week.

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