

Butler County 4-Her's Attend Citizenship in Action



Eighteen Butler County 4-Hers attended Kansas 4-H Citizenship in Action on February 20-21 in Topeka. Citizenship in Action, sponsored by the State 4-H Youth Leadership Council, gives youth an opportunity to learn about the state legislative process and how they as citizens can use their voices to affect change in their communities.

These 4-Hers, representing the Benton Busy Bees, Cassoday Boosters, Lily Lake, Purple Heart and Towanda Rustlers clubs, spent Sunday afternoon in small group plenary sessions. Each group was assigned a current issue to discuss. Groups then received instruction on facilitating civil discourse. This included making sure that each member's opinion was heard and considered, and using these opinions to reach consensus and write a proposed bill. "Politics and discussions around them have become increasingly heated and divisive in the past few years," stated Butler County 4-H and Youth Development

Agent Briony Smith. "This activity gives our 4-Hers a solid foundation and practice in active listening, mutual respect and consensus building."

The work session was followed by a dinner banquet. Attending this banquet alongside 4-Hers, Extension Agents and volunteer chaperones were several members of the Kansas Legislature, including Senator Michael Fagg (R-14). 4-Hers then traveled to the Kansas State Capitol to present and debate their bills in the House and Senate chambers. This opportunity familiarized them with the rules and customs of each chamber and provided another opportunity to engage in civil discourse and debate. Each bill was then subject to a member vote using a QR code.

Monday morning provided time for 4-Hers to meet with their legislators and tour the Capitol. Senator Fagg invited the group to visit his office on the second floor. During this visit, the Senator gave 4-Hers a glimpse into his work routine, including his daily meetings as a member of the Agriculture and Natural Resources, Utilities, and Ways and Means committees. He also detailed the process that bills take beginning with committee discussions and advancing through the committee to the Senate floor. Senator Fagg emphasized the importance of building positive relationships with fellow legislators to enable them to work together to find common ground. He encouraged 4-Hers to follow and participate in the legislative process and to consider how they could serve their communities in volunteer and elected capacities.

"I liked learning about how the House of Representatives worked, and teaching others who were in the Senate group and hearing what they did. I was the spokesperson for my group and it was fun getting to talk in front of everyone in the House about the bill our group made and why it was important to us," said Purple Heart member Kylee Barlett.

4-H is America's largest youth development organization. Membership in 4-H is open to all youth ages 5-18. Members in each of Butler County's 10 clubs participate in personal and leadership development opportunities such as public speaking and parliamentary procedure as well as selected projects in areas such as Agriculture and Natural Resources, Animal Science, Creative Arts, Family and Consumer Science, Personal Development (including Civic Engagement) and STEM. Kansas 4-H is delivered in partnership with local volunteers and resources, Kansas State Research and Extension, Kansas State University and the National Cooperative Extension System. For more information about Kansas 4-H, visit kansas4-h.org. For information about Butler County clubs, contact Briony Smith, Butler County 4-H and Youth Development Extension Agent at briony@ksu.edu or (316) 321-9660.