

The Impact of 4-H on Grace Piper

Growing up Grace always had a fascination for animals, more specifically, farm animals. Her big dream at the ripe age of 5 was to milk a cow, and not with one of those cool robots that were all the rage at the time, but by hand on top of a bucket like what she had done at dairy days and local fairs. One problem, she didn't live on a farm. However, living in a rural community had its advantages. Her mom got talking to another parent during a home and school meeting where they suggested Grace join 4-H when she turned 9. Grace counted down the days until she could register.

When the big day came Grace found the dairy club to be, well, a bit overwhelming for a girl who's only knowledge about cows came from videos she'd watch in health class about the importance of drinking milk. Naturally, Grace was a bit disappointed. That was until her mom enrolled her in another project. It was called Trash to Treasure and this time it wasn't about animals. Over the course of 6 weeks Grace learned the importance of recycling, the effects overconsumption has on the world, and how she could help fix the problem. But the best part? Grace made friends that opened her eyes to all the possibilities that 4-H had to offer. She learned new life skills like collaboration and communication that she could use in her everyday life. Grace also met and continues to meet incredible leaders, volunteers, and role models who have helped her in so many ways in and outside of 4-H. The advice and guidance they have given to her has shaped who she is as a person and has helped to teach her who she wants to become. Through these leaders and their connections, recommendations, and support, Grace has won many 4-H awards, contests, and has even gotten some great job offers!

Grace's life slowly started to change as she fell in love with 4-H. Over the course of the

next six years she took 40 different projects ranging from quilting to nature conservation and even pickling! As she got older she got to take part in amazing regional and provincial opportunities like Go For The Gold and Youth Adventure camp. This is where she learned confidence and keeping an open mind when meeting new people. At camp she was also given a deeper understanding of skills she already gained from 4-H; goal setting, teamwork, communication and collaboration. She also had the opportunity to use the skills she had learned like public speaking and networking, in different environments such as participating in speech competitions and science contests.

4-H has taken Grace so far and she's so excited to see what the rest of her years will look like as a 4-Her! Oh and by the way, Grace met an amazing friend who convinced her to take the dairy club again and now she can't believe she didn't love it the first time.