

# OPINION

## Notes from UW Extension

WISCONSIN 4-H CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF GROWING WISCONSIN LEADERS

By Debbie Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Educator, UW-Extension Cooperative Extension Lincoln County

Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development will spend 2014 celebrating 100 years of positive youth development programming. Since 1914, Wisconsin 4-H has helped youth grow the leadership, critical thinking and communications skills necessary to be successful in a constantly changing world.

Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development is part of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, and 4-H programs are delivered in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture and federal, state and local governments. 4-H has its roots in youth corn and agriculture clubs, which helped researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Extension share the latest agriculture developments with farmers by teaching their children.

Just seven youth attended the first 4-H club meeting in Walworth County on October 30, 1914. Today, more than 35,000 youth are enrolled as community club members, and nearly 50,000 young people are involved in 4-H through in-school and after-school clubs, day camps, mentoring programs and other opportunities. All Wisconsin 4-H programs are supported by the hard work of more than 20,000 youth and adult volunteers. Here in Lincoln County we have 13 community clubs and five clubs that meet during after school programs. Over 450 youth and 150 adult volunteers are involved in 4-H through these 18 clubs. Wisconsin 4-H programs continue to emphasize lifelong learning and a strong connection with the University of Wisconsin, and programs are available for all interests including science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), agriculture and animal science, arts and communications, leadership, healthy living, international exchange and more.

Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development will celebrate the Centennial with a few statewide events throughout the year. Wisconsin 4-H Day at the Capitol was held on March 19, 2014; April was Wisconsin 4-H Statewide Service Month; and August 5, 2014 is Wisconsin 4-H Day at the State Fair.

In addition to Lincoln County's participation in these statewide celebrations, a committee composed of youth and adults have been planning how Lincoln County would celebrate this anniversary locally. Events and projects include:

- Resolutions recognizing the 100th Anniversary were adopted on May 13th by the Merrill City Council and on May 20th by the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors.
- Each 4-H club was asked to create a display of their club's history that is now on display in the lower level hallway of the Lincoln County Service Center. The displays will be moved to various events throughout the year.
- 4-H club members and leaders are collecting stories from former 4-H members and leaders along with photos until October. The stories along with photos will be published later this year or early 2015 in a booklet.
- 4-H Reunion Celebration is being planned for Saturday, August 23rd between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at Tug Lake Park. There will be fun games, chance to share memories and a meal. Main dish will be provided. Attendees are asked to bring a dish to share, lawn chair(s), photos, 4-H scrapbooks, etc. RSVP by Monday, August 4th to the UW-Extension office at 715-539-1072.
- An older youth member is in the process of designing a mural in honor of the 4-H Centennial with hopes to have it completed by the end of the year.
- A special t-shirt recognizing Lincoln County's celebration of the Wisconsin 4-H Centennial is now on sale.

Committee members are continuing to plan additional events and projects that will be incorporated into 2014 4-H activities. For more information about any of these items, please contact the UW-Extension office at 715-539-1072 or stop by our office located in the Lincoln County Service Center – Lower Level at 801 N. Sales Street in Merrill. You can also visit the Lincoln County 4-H blog at <http://fyi.uwex.edu/lincolncounty/4h/> or the Wisconsin 4-H Centennial blog at <http://blogs.ces.uwex.edu/4hcentennial/> to learn more about the last 100 years of Wisconsin 4-H.

If you are interested in learning more about 4-H or want to get involved in Lincoln County 4-H, please feel free to contact Debbie or Amanda at the UW-Extension office at (715) 539-1072 or visit our website at <http://lincoln.uwex.edu/>. Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development is a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension in partnership with local, state and federal government in each Wisconsin county.