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News and features written by Pennsylvania 4-H Members.

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4-H Member's Journey From Shy Beginnings to Confident Leadership

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State Council

Communications Committee

Thirteen-year-old Taylor Fetterman of Somerset County stood outside the Extension office with a knot in her stomach, staring at the bus that would take her to her very first 4-H State Leadership Conference.

For Taylor, this moment felt enormous. She had never been away from home without her parents or grandparents. The thought of climbing aboard the bus filled her with anxiety.

Given the chance, she would have quietly slipped back into her family's SUV and headed home. But her older brother had other plans.

With a playful nudge of her elbow, he said, "Come on. We're getting on the bus, don't make me pick you up and carry you!"

With hesitation, Taylor climbed the bus steps and stayed close beside him, unsure of what the weekend would bring. What she didn't know at that moment was that the trip ahead would transform the way she saw herself.

When Taylor arrived at the State Leadership Conference, she was a shy 4-H member who preferred to stay in the background. But as the weekend unfolded, something began to change.

Through leadership workshops, group activities and conversations with other young people from across the state, Taylor discovered something powerful.

She began to realize leadership wasn't about being the loudest voice in the room. Instead, it was about having the courage to grow.

By the time the conference ended, Taylor returned home inspired. The quiet girl who boarded the bus days earlier came back ready to embrace the leader within her.

On the bus ride home, Taylor made a promise to herself. She would take the passion and inspiration she gained at the State Leadership Conference and put it into action within her own club.

At the first meeting of the year, she took a leap of faith and ran for an officer position. Taylor was elected treasurer of the County Clovers 4-H Club. The same young girl who once kept to herself was now standing up each month to present the treasurer's report to her peers.

But her journey didn't stop there. That summer another opportunity appeared: to become a State Project Ambassador. It felt like a long shot,



Provided by 4-H State Council

From left, 4-H State Project Ambassadors –Expressive Arts, Aurielle Miller, Taylor Fetterman, Lillian Mano and Levi Lazarus.



Trevor Fetterman reads an agricultural book to Commonwealth Charter Academy students during Pennsylvania 4-H week.

but her brother once again offered some simple advice that stuck with her: "You miss every shot you don't take."

In spite of her fears, Taylor took the shot. To her surprise and excitement, she was selected as a Pennsylvania 4-H State Project Ambassador for Expressive Arts. In what felt like the blink of an eye, Taylor had grown from a quiet club member into a leader representing her very favorite

project area at the state level.

Motivated by the impact the conference had on her life, Taylor wanted other young people to experience it too. Together with her brother, she began encouraging fellow 4-H members to attend the State Leadership Conference.

Just one year later, Taylor had successfully recruited three members from her club to join her at the event. The conference that once intimidat-

ed her had become her favorite 4-H experience.

This time, Taylor didn't need anyone to nudge her onto the bus and she certainly wasn't clinging to her brother's side. Instead, she boarded with confidence, ready to offer support to new attendees and to share the experience that helped her discover her voice.

Through 4-H, Taylor found something she didn't realize she had

been missing: the confidence to step forward and lead. Her story reflects the message behind this year's Pennsylvania 4-H State Council theme: "Passion Sparks Opportunity."

For Taylor, one moment of courage and stepping onto a bus she was afraid to board sparked a journey that continues to open doors, inspire others and shape her into the passionate young leader she is becoming.

Taylor certainly isn't the only State Leadership Conference attendee who felt inspired by the newly announced 4-H theme. It ignited a wave of inspiration among youths attending the State Leadership Conference to take on new challenges and pursue their passion with renewed purpose.

The 2026 Pennsylvania 4-H State Council is challenging 4-H members statewide to embrace their individual passions and pursue the opportunities those passions can create.

Aurielle Miller, from Clinton County, said the theme reminded her that passion is a powerful motivator.

"It reminds me that if I'm passionate about something, I can go far," she said. "Whether that is learning a new skill or doing a new activity, if I am passionate about it, I can accomplish it."

Nathan Kennedy, from Indiana County, echoed that message. He emphasized the doors passion can open

"To me it means that when you follow your passions you end up in situations where you make connections," he explained. "Those connections can lead to opportunities."

Fellow Indiana County member, Rachel Cribbs, added that 4-H has already shown her how passion fuels growth.

"This theme means a lot to me because through 4-H and my passion for my projects, I've been given so many opportunities to grow and meet amazing new people," she said.

Carson Riley, from Huntington County, first heard the theme at the State Leadership Conference and said, "When you're passionate about something and put your heart and soul into it, there will be many opportunities that come to you through your passion."

This year the Pennsylvania 4-H State Council challenges every member to ignite their spark, explore their interests boldly and embrace every opportunity.

Taylor's journey demonstrates even shy beginnings can lead to passionate leadership.

Editor's Note: Trevor Fetterman is the brother of Taylor Fetterman.

4-H Wildlife and Forestry Field Day

Penn State Extension will host 4-H Wildlife and Forestry Field Day from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. May 9, at the Penn State Ag Progress Days site, 2710 W. Pine Grove Road, Pennsylvania Furnace, Pennsylvania.

This year's theme is Head, Heart, Hand, Health and Habitat. Youths do not need any preparation or prior experience with wildlife or forestry to participate. The event will be held rain or shine.

The "Exploratory Track" for youths ages 8-11 will in-

clude hands-on wildlife and forestry educational activities, guest speakers and interactive learning experiences.

The "Science Track" offers youths ages 12-18 the opportunity to participate in a series of educational sessions to expand their knowledge and skills in wildlife and forest sciences.

The sessions will bring to life content from 4-H wildlife and forestry project books and help participants better understand current conservation issues. The event also

is aimed at inspiring participants to investigate potential career paths in forest and wildlife conservation.

At the end of the event, teens can compete in an optional interactive quiz, which is offered to help identify youths who may be interested in or prepared for national-level 4-H opportunities.

This year, the event is open to external participants, including those not involved in 4-H. The registration fee is \$20 and the deadline to register is April 27. More information is available online.

Administered in Pennsylvania by Penn State Extension, 4-H is a community of more than 6 million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Penn State Extension 4-H youth development educators in all 67 counties throughout the commonwealth administer local 4-H programs through non-formal education and outreach. To find your local program, visit the Penn State Extension website at <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/4-h>.



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