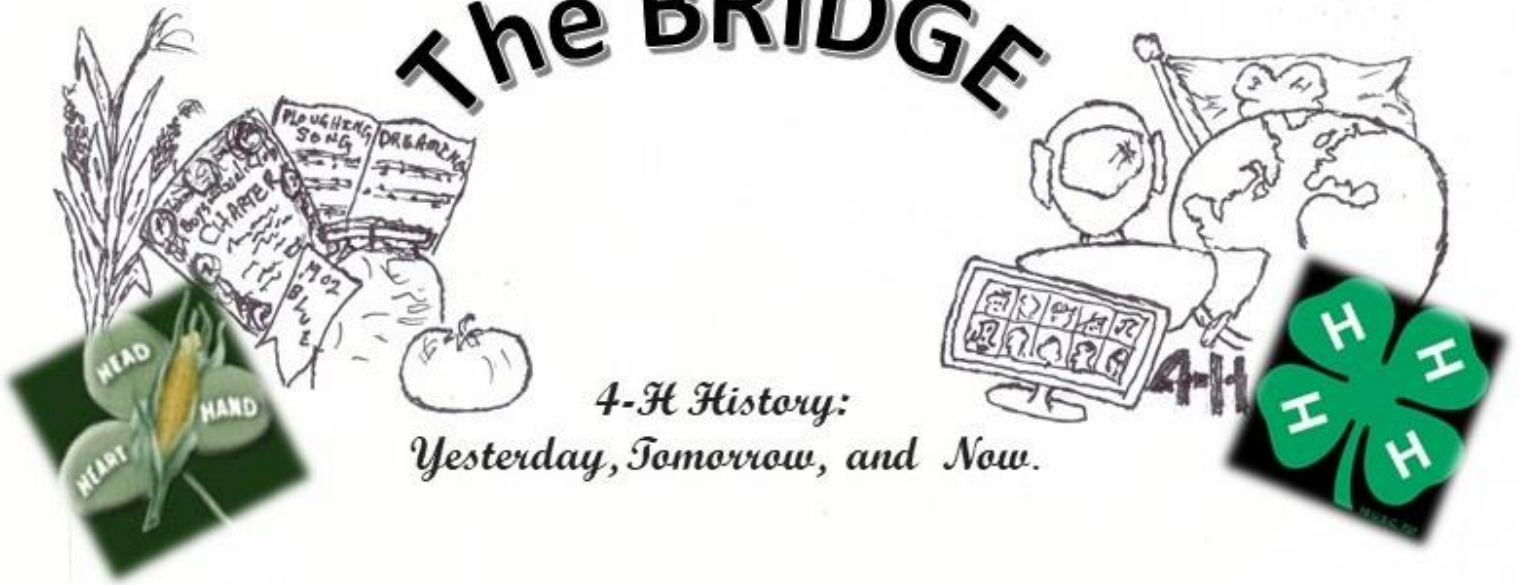


The BRIDGE



*4-H History:
Yesterday, Tomorrow, and Now.*

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Where Are They Now?

By Betty Gottler, NAE4-HYDP Archivist

Among the various national 4-H awards a 4-H Member could win in the 1980s was Coca-Cola's National 4-H Citizenship Award. This \$1,000 scholarship and trip to National 4-H Congress recognized 4-H'ers for their exemplary 4-H Citizenship projects. For, 1988, their 13th year of sponsorship, the Coca-Cola Foundation chose to honor nine 4-H'ers for their support of local food pantries, providing baby-sitting clinics, bringing elderly and teens together to socialize while working on outdoor chores, implementing health initiatives and improving themselves through participation in state and national 4-H Citizenship education programs.

The nine honorees were: Chris Tomkins, FL; Michael Cowen, GA; Deblyn Holsinger, IL; Jennifer Peterson, IA; Heather Easterday, KS; Amy Ross, PA; Linda Johnson, SC; Alyson Amonette, TN; Kristi Johnson, TN.

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The 1988 Coca-Cola 4-H Citizenship Winners and their stories as they appeared in the November 1989 (vol. 42, no. 5) edition of the NAE4-HA News & Views magazine, pages 28-31.

That was in 1988. Today, 36 years later, where are they? We were lucky to connect with three of the national winners, Michael Cowan, GA, Amy Ross Sidelinger, PA/NJ and Jennifer Peterson Kreutner, IA. Enjoy their stories.

As a Georgia 4-H'er, **Michael Cowan** worked with the Newton County Clean Community Commission as Woodsy the Owl to prevent littering, organized groups to visit local nursing homes, and worked to increase local voter registration. Holding several 4-H offices and giving project presentations gave him opportunities to become a better speaker, thinker, and problem solver. A Georgia Tech graduate (BS), with an MBA from Emory University, he eventually led the AT&T Accessories Team and worked to improve sustainability and reduce packaging waste. He was recognized as the company's Environmental Champion for those efforts. His 4-H work on the Forestry Field Day team helped spur a lifelong commitment to protecting and preserving our natural world with a special interest in trees and native plants. He served as the Executive Director of Dunwoody Nature Center and chairman of the Dunwoody Sustainability Committee where he led efforts to establish a city-wide water quality monitoring program, helped the city become a Bee City USA and led the implementation of a comprehensive sustainability plan. The city council proclaimed him its Sustainability Hero in 2023. He currently is a partner in a small business, ReForest ATL, that focuses on native habitat restoration in greenspaces and residential yards throughout the metro Atlanta area and is board member of the Georgia Native Plant Society where he is helping lead the campaign to change the state flower from a non-native invasive plant to a native plant. As an active leader of Boy Scout Troop 434 he still teaches the Forestry and Sustainability merit badges. He credits his teenage involvement in 4-H as the catalyst that shaped his future citizenship and proved the inspiration for his ongoing love of nature and work to foster environmental sustainability in his community.

A 4-H'er from the Keystone State, **Amy Ross Sidelinger** remembers her National 4-H Congress trip fondly. She and her twin sister, Emily, attended National 4-H Congress together and felt blessed that they got to share together in the fun. Amy remembers that she wanted to keep everyone involved in 4-H. She believes her efforts to do so made an impact on her and her community. While having fun, she learned skills that would guide her for life. For Amy, whether it was

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volunteering with people with intellectual disabilities to involve them in 4-H; reading to, and spending time with, a partially sighted senior citizen; baking for, working at, and running fundraisers; instructing younger 4-H'ers in sewing and needlework; or picking up trash as part of the "Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful" campaign; learning happened. Her career in financial analysis, auditing and compliance has taken her from Pittsburgh to New York and New Jersey. Her husband is a volunteer fire fighter which led her to the auxiliary side of the fire service. The skills learned and practiced in 4-H such as organizing tasks, working with people, balancing multiple projects, running meetings, and speaking in public gave her the skills she needed to be successful in the various leadership positions she has held during the last 20 years. The thousands of hours of helping others have served as her reward for spreading kindness throughout her community. Amy Ross Sidelinger now uses her needlework skills to contribute fabric squares to charity quilts with the local chapter of The Applique Society and Hearts for Hospice.

For **Jennifer Peterson Kreutner**, an Iowa 4-H alum, the key was the smiles. Her 4-H Citizenship Project brought smiles from nursing home residents who enjoyed the baby animals she and other 4-H members brought to brighten their day, smiles from youngsters learning new babysitting skills, and smiles from 4-H'ers making new friends while learning U. S. history and developing Citizenship skills during her CWF trip. She recognized those smiles as a "Citizenship Key": relationships are vital. People need other people, so good citizens help and love their neighbors. For Jennifer, loving her neighbors stands second only to loving God. An Iowa State graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management, she remembers helping two friends start the Iowa State Collegiate 4-H Club. Following college, she worked in hotel and customer service jobs using the relationship skills from her 4-H years to serve others. She also became a 4-H Club leader. Today, Jennifer Kreutner and her husband own a family farm where they raise crops and run a Hereford cow-calf and locker beef operation. They have homeschooled their three children and now have their first grandson. Emphasizing the importance of relationships helps them make wise business and family decisions. She explains, "Every time we recited the 4-H pledge, we committed to using our head, heart, hands, and health to serve our club, community, country, and world. That commitment is still important to me today. I have become a better citizen of my country through my 4-H Citizenship projects, and I am thankful for all those who helped teach and mentor me. My most important job has been to teach and guide my children to become good citizens, who will in turn teach their children and others these same lessons: love God and love your neighbor.

4-H Citizenship means contributing to the world around you and giving service to others, learning how to solve problems in your community, and how to take action in a positive way. Be the change you wish to see in the world. Thank you, Michael Cowan, GA, Amy Ross Sidelinger, PA/NJ and Jennifer Peterson Kreutner, IA for telling us your stories and continuing to give back to your community.

There were six other youth recognized in 1988. Sadly, Chris Thompkins passed away in 2005. If you know where any of the other honorees are, we would welcome learning their stories, too! **Send your information to:**

Editor@4-HHistory.com

Thank you to all the 4-H members and 4-H Volunteers who continue to positively change the world.



My National 4-H Conference Experience

By Zach Cryer, 2024 National 4-H Conference Youth Leadership Team (YLT) member from Louisiana

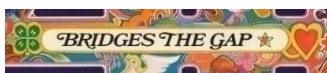
The National 4-H Conference is an opportunity for youth around the nation to meet and express their love for agriculture. Whether they come from Minnesota or Maryland, New York or the Northern Mariana Islands, every youth participant at the National 4-H Conference has one thing in common, and they use that passion for 4-H to create meaningful change as they meet with federal officials and government agencies throughout the week they spend in Washington, D.C.

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There are three types of participants in the National 4-H Conference: Delegates, Collegiate Facilitators, and the Youth Leadership Team. During the conference, delegates spend most of their time in committees crafting and practicing presentations to give to their assigned agencies. They spend hours upon hours collaborating with other delegates and collegiate facilitators from across the nation. While the other youth are in committees, the Youth Leadership Team (YLT) is busy working behind the scenes to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Just as for both the delegates and collegiate facilitators, the work for the YLT began nearly six months before the actual conference. We held biweekly virtual meetings to plan all aspects of the event, including creating the theme, designing logos, and writing scripts to introduce our guest speakers. When we landed in D.C., we immediately hit the ground running and filmed promotional videos, rehearsed speaking parts and set up the decorations for the week. After the conference began, it was the YLT's task to ensure that each delegate felt welcomed, comfortable, and excited for the week ahead. This role was my favorite part of my involvement as a member of the Youth Leadership Team, because it allowed for a new level of connection with 4-H'ers from across the country.

Serving as one of this year's Youth Leadership Team was an honor, because it was an opportunity to represent a program that I love at the highest level. I was involved in 4-H from the moment I could join up until I graduated high school, and the program has truly had a massive impact on my personal life. In my time as a National Conference Delegate, I had the opportunity to share that impact, and be surrounded by the best of the best in National 4-H. Being surrounded by so many champions for American Agriculture as we collectively worked towards the betterment of our program is an experience I will never forget, and I knew I wanted to somehow reinvest and give that same experience to future delegates. Being one of this year's YLT members gave me that opportunity. Although my time as a youth in 4-H is over, my experience as a YLT taught me that there is always a way to give back to our program. Whether it be as a collegiate facilitator or future adult volunteer, I hope to continue impacting the lives of those around me through National 4-H, and I credit my experience at the National 4-H Conference for this goal.



A Meditation on 4-H: It Provided a Strong Foundation for Me

by Russ Weathers, National 4-H Council Senior Vice President, 1986 – 1991(Retired)

Editor's Note: Comment captured during an interview of Mr. Weathers by Jo Turner on June 17, 2023, while researching data for the 1980 - 2025 4-H History Book.

Looking back, I recall being involved in this program 75 years ago as a kid and the value it brought to my life. It contributed to shaping who I am today. It was important then, and I believe the program still holds that significance. When reflecting on the 100 years of 4-H's existence and the millions of young people who have gone through it, I think anyone who has been involved in 4-H can take pride in the fact that we have persevered through various changes, generations, funding issues, and territorial challenges to make a difference in the lives of young people. There are now hundreds of thousands of you and I's who have benefited from that.

This is what I reflect upon in my career when I look back at my time in 4-H. It holds meaning for me in two ways. Firstly, my mother's dedication to 4-H makes me feel like it is part of her legacy, and being able to spend part of my time at the National level during a time of transition and invest in programs that shape the legacy of future leaders is a positive experience. Secondly, it provided a strong foundation for me as I moved on to the next position and has continued to influence me positively over the last 25 years."



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4-H History Preservation Website and My Welcome to the World of 4-H

Posted to the N4-HHPT Website on **August 31, 2014** by **Chad Proudfoot**

<https://news.4-hhistorypreservation.com/2014/08/31/4-h-history-preservation-website-and-my-welcome-to-the-world-of-4-h/>

Editor's Note: Chad Proudfoot began his 4-H Career as a member of the WV State 4-H Staff and today is the State 4-H Organizational Specialist, Virginia Tech. In the article below, he mentions 4-H films. For more information about films and 4-H, see "4-H Films that Inspire" in the 4-H Promotion Compendium at:

https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/History/4-H_Promotion/.

In the spring of 2012, I was still relatively new to the Extension Service and very new to the world of 4-H as I had originally been hired in Extension's Community Resources & Economic Development unit. So, when I was asked to teach the Heritage Class at Older 4-H Members' Conference (OMC – one of our three major state camps for 14–21-year-olds), I was both excited and terrified. I had not grown up in 4-H, and a year before this I could not have told anyone what the four Hs even stood for; now I was being asked to teach a two-hour class for four days at a major camp. "These kids will eat me alive!" was my first thought, but then I began looking for resources to plan my lessons.

I had learned that Heritage Class had become a little stale in the past couple of years, where students made small heritage crafts and the like, and it was not very exciting. I also learned that the mission of OMC is to develop leadership, so I decided to take a new approach with the class. I wanted to focus on a different topic each day, and for there to be meaningful discussion with those in the class.

As I was putting my ideas together, I spoke with our state 4-H leader, Debbie McDonald, who was very supportive of my thoughts for a revamped Heritage Class. She gave me a card for the National 4-H History Preservation Team and suggested that I look at their website for guidance. When I looked online, I could hardly believe all of the amazing resources that came pouring out! I was able to develop the four topical days regarding the history of 4-H and music in the 4-H program just from what I found on the website.

My favorite use of the site came from the section on 4-H films. I decided to make the final day of my Heritage Class into "movie day," because the campers were tired and needed some time to relax. But I also determined that our movie must fit our goals, and that we would have a discussion. The 4-H History Preservation website led me to the film "The Green Promise" starring Walter Brennan and Natalie Wood. When I previewed it, I found the film to be a bit dated, but I thought that it still had a great message, could certainly be used for programming, and might be something that the Heritage Class participants would enjoy.

I could never have dreamed how much the kids in my class loved and appreciated this film! They hung on every word, and when it was through, they had a great discussion about the film's message, the time period in which it was made, what about it was relevant or not relevant to today, and a host of other topics. I could not have been more excited. It was at the end of that week that I knew 4-H was the right place for me.

A few months after that class, the Extension Service moved my appointment to the 4-H Youth Development Unit as the Cultural Resource Specialist, and I became the first full-time Extension Historian and the Historic Preservation Officer of Jackson's Mill State 4-H Camp.



Robert Paige inducts child star Natalie Wood as a member of 4-H in "The Green Promise," a Glenn McCarthy production for R-K-O release in which Marguerite Chapman and Walter Brennan co-star.

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Now I use the National 4-H History Preservation website on a regular basis, and it is one of the first resources to which I point anyone when they are looking for any aspect of 4-H history. I have used the site to develop curriculum, write flag ceremonies, and to allow others to appreciate all of the culture and heritage that is enveloped in the 100+ years of the 4-H program. As a new member of the 4-H family, I now proudly say the 4-H Pledge, sing "The H's Four," and use the myriad resources available to promote the heritage of the best youth development program the world has ever seen.



4-H Fun FACT

One of my favorite places that I visit as often as possible is the Eisenhower National Historic Site in Gettysburg, PA (where President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Mrs. Eisenhower had their working farm in retirement). A few years ago I was visiting the farm, and the last room on the house tour is Eisenhower's office off the large den. There they keep a collection of some of his favorite books, and those he felt were important. I'd seen the shelf many times before, but as I looked up this time, I saw that one of the books on the shelf was "**The 4-H Story**" by **Franklin Reck**. I asked the ranger about that and he said "Oh, yes, Ike was a very big fan of 4-H! After he left the White House he always used to purchase cattle from the 4-H livestock shows here in Adams County, and he used to invite 4-H'ers to come out to the farm. He always said that he regretted that his growing up predated the program, because he would have enjoyed being a 4-H'er." I just thought that was a fun tidbit that you all might get a kick out of.

National 4-H History Preservation Team Member Chad Proudfoot

Tell Us Your 4-H History Story

Share your photos and stories of the history YOU made in 4-H!

We know you've made 4-H History. So, tell us about it! The world wants to know YOUR 4-H history!
Send your articles to: Editor@4-HHistory.com

Submissions longer than 500 words must include a 500-words or less summary. The in-depth articles will be posted to our web-site and linked to the summary that will appear in the newsletter.

Thanks for reading The BRIDGE. Look for our next issue November 15, 2024!



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