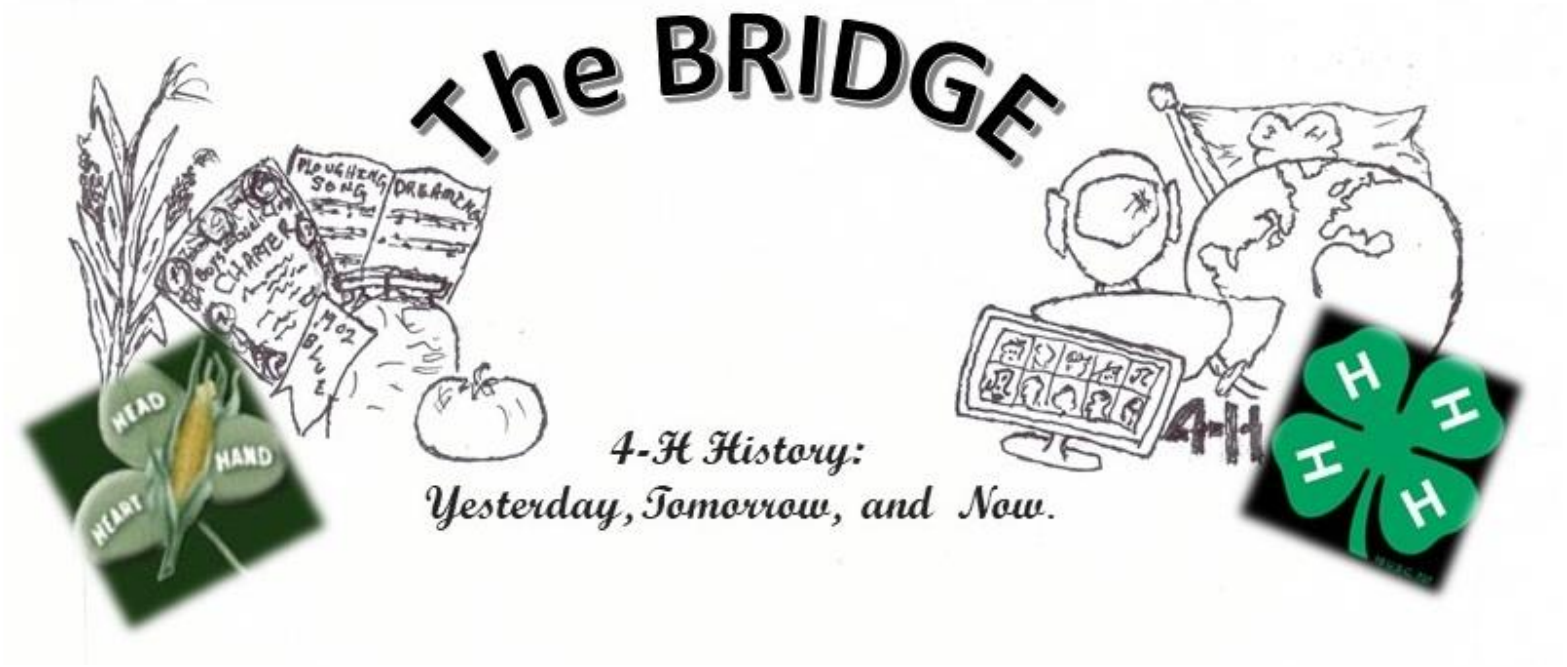


Vol. 15, No. 4 November 2026

In this issue:

- **The Glory Be 4-H Centennial Bear Story,** by Ron Drum, N4-HHPT Member
- **Why not a 4-H bear? From a 4-H Idea to a Collection of Its Own,** by Steve Bolt, CEO, Glory Be Collectibles
- **The National 4-H Geospatial Youth Team Commemorates 125 years of 4-H,** by Cameron Graham, N4-HGSYTeam member
- **A Quote of Note**
- **He's Making a List; He's Checking it Twice…,** by Luke Duran. Montana 4-H alum and volunteer
- **The National 4-H History Preservation Team Update,** by Tina Veal, Illinois, Secretary, N4-HHPT
- **4-H Fun FACT,** *Tell Us Your 4-H History Story*

Editor's note: So many celebrations! So little time! 2027 marks the year 4-H chooses to celebrate its 125th birthday. As we know, 4-H began in various locations around the country in the years between 1890 and 1910. 4-H chooses to celebrate its birth using the year 1902 as the "first" year. That made 2002 the year of the 4-H Centennial, 100 years of 4-H, and its 125th, of course, next year in 2027. This year The BRIDGE has been telling stories about the 4-H Centennial celebrations of 2002 and celebrating 125 years of 4-H as our "birthday" approaches.

This edition of The BRIDGE begins with a few stories that we just couldn't BEAR not to include!

So, read on and enjoy the celebrations!!

The Glory Be 4-H Centennial Bear Story.
by Ron Drum, N4-HHPT Member



The 2002 4-H Centennial Bear

Perhaps you have one of these cute little fellows sitting on a shelf (or perhaps in a box or trunk) still smiling its cute little smile. One 4-H alum told us, "*Mine is still in the original plastic bag, never been out of the bag*."[1]



Perhaps you have the 2001 version bear which is often confused with the 2002 Centennial Bear. The 2001 version was covered in white clovers with a white snout and paws. Not a Centennial Bear, but still lovably cute!

Indeed, there are quite a few lovably cute Glory Be plush critters running around wearing 4-H Clovers. In fact, during a recent check of their website, nineteen 4-H critters; cows, pigs, chickens, horses, goats, dogs, even unicorns; were available for you to cuddle along with your 4-H Centennial Bear.

However, Centennial Bear went all out. Not only was (s)he named "Centennial", but there were also tags to prove it, including the catchphrase: "The Power of YOUth".







And each 4-H Glory Be critter carries a product tag confirming it is both Glory Be and 4-H approved. The product-tag reads, "*Made for 4-H by Glory Be. Protected under 18 U.S.C. 707*". And that made it official!

Except perhaps not.

"*Seemed like a no brainer*," said Don Floyd, National 4-H Council President and CEO, 2000-2013, "*then one day a cease-and-desist letter shows up from legal at USDA. So, the Bears died a sudden death. … Poor Glory* (Be) *Bears just wanted to make a few kids happy*!"[2] Council staff at the time were even told to remove all their Glory Be critters from their office spaces and take them home.

At that time, Council was developing an ever-increasing number of licensing agreements with a variety of for-profit companies allowing them to brand products with the 4-H emblem and share the profits with National 4-H Council for 4-H programming. As far back as the 1920s when the 4-H Clover officially became the national emblem of 4-H, questions were raised if the use of the 4-H Clover in marketing was lawful. Therefore, 4-H name and emblem guidelines were written by USDA 4-H and throughout the lifetime of 4-H, almost constantly were revised.

As the 1990s moved forward, Council was increasingly finding ways to leverage the 4-H Clover to raise funds for 4-H. However, USDA 4-H questioned each new idea suggesting such use was unlawful. By the turn of the 21st century, most of Council's emblem-leveraging opportunities were deemed inappropriate.

Glory Be was founded by owner, Steve Bolt, in 1999. His idea was to make plush toys and other products such as, pins, coins, hats, bags, etcetera customized with a client's theme and logo.[3] Realizing the opportunity this presented, Council became one of their first clients.[4] Apparently by 2002, USDA 4-H had reached a limit in their patience. Floyd explained, "*We were doing so many cool things for* (the) *Centennial, working with a terrific* (Extension) *committee…. They loved the bear idea and blessed it*…" along with several other leveraging ideas. Unfortunately for Council, most of these ideas, along with the bear, were vetoed by USDA 4-H. [5]

Eventually enough of the issues were worked out to allow licensing to move forward, but that took decades; certainly not in time to keep Centennial Bear as part of the Council product line in 2002. So, if you DO have a **2002 Glory Be 4-H Centennial Bear**, you have something to celebrate, and we don't mean just the first 100 years of 4-H!



These canning jar rings were sold in the late 1940s to early 1950s. By then, the clover was no longer allowed to be used for marketing but, apparently, the name was still fair game.

[1] Jim Rutledge email to Jo Turner and Ron Drum 8/4/2026
[2] Don Floyd email to Jo Turner and Ron Drum 8/3/2026
[3] https://www.glorybe.com/about accessed 8/31/26
[4] https://www.glorybe.com/portfolio accessed 8/31/26
[5] Don Floyd email



Why not a 4-H bear? From a 4-H Idea to a Collection of Its Own
by Steve Bolt, CEO, Glory Be Collectibles (www.glorybe.com)

Glory Be began in 1999. At the time, the Beanie Baby craze was in full swing, and we decided to jump into the world of plush toys. We began with bears. Our first bear was "It's Your Birthday" Bear and our first customers were Hallmark stores and collectors. We quickly discovered that there was something special about creating a keepsake that could connect people to an organization, an experience, or a cherished memory.

The idea of a 4-H bear came about in a surprisingly ordinary way. One day, my son and I were outside doing yardwork when we started talking about 4-H and wondering if there might be an opportunity to create something for the organization. My daughters were members of our local Fallbrook[1] 4-H Club, and our family had already made plenty of 4-H memories together at the Del Mar Fair[2]. We knew firsthand how much 4-H meant to young people and their families.

Then came the simple question: **Why not a 4-H bear?**

That question turned into our first 4-H bear, followed by a collection of bears representing 4-H programs across the country. What started as an idea in the backyard gradually grew much bigger. By 2002, we felt we had earned the opportunity to reach out to state 4-H leaders about creating a special Centennial Bear.



This is the 1999 Arkansas 4-H Bear

We wanted it to be more than just another plush animal—it needed to feel like a true keepsake celebrating an important milestone in 4-H history. We selected a sparkling plush material that was quite unique at the time, giving the bear a distinctive look and a little extra magic.

Over the years, Glory Be grew along with our 4-H collection. For several years, teddy bears were our specialty. Eventually, however, we realized that if we were going to celebrate the many facets of 4-H, we couldn't stop with bears. Today, our collection includes a full array of 4-H animals, each designed to capture the spirit, personality, and pride associated with this remarkable organization.



And, of course, we couldn't resist adding a little imagination to the mix. Last year, we introduced a **4-H Unicorn**—proof that after all these years, we're still willing to have a little fun.

Looking back, it's remarkable to think that Glory Be started with one simple idea sparked during a day of yardwork. What began as a small venture into plush toys became a family connection to 4-H and, eventually, a collection enjoyed by 4-H members, families, leaders, alumni, and collectors.

For us, these aren't simply stuffed animals. They are reminders of the experiences, friendships, accomplishments, and memories that make 4-H special.

And it all started with one question: **Why not a 4-H bear?**

---

[1] Fallbrook is a scenic, unincorporated community in northern San Diego County, California, widely known as the avocado capital of the world.
[2] Also known as the San Diego County Fair (https://www.sdfair.com/



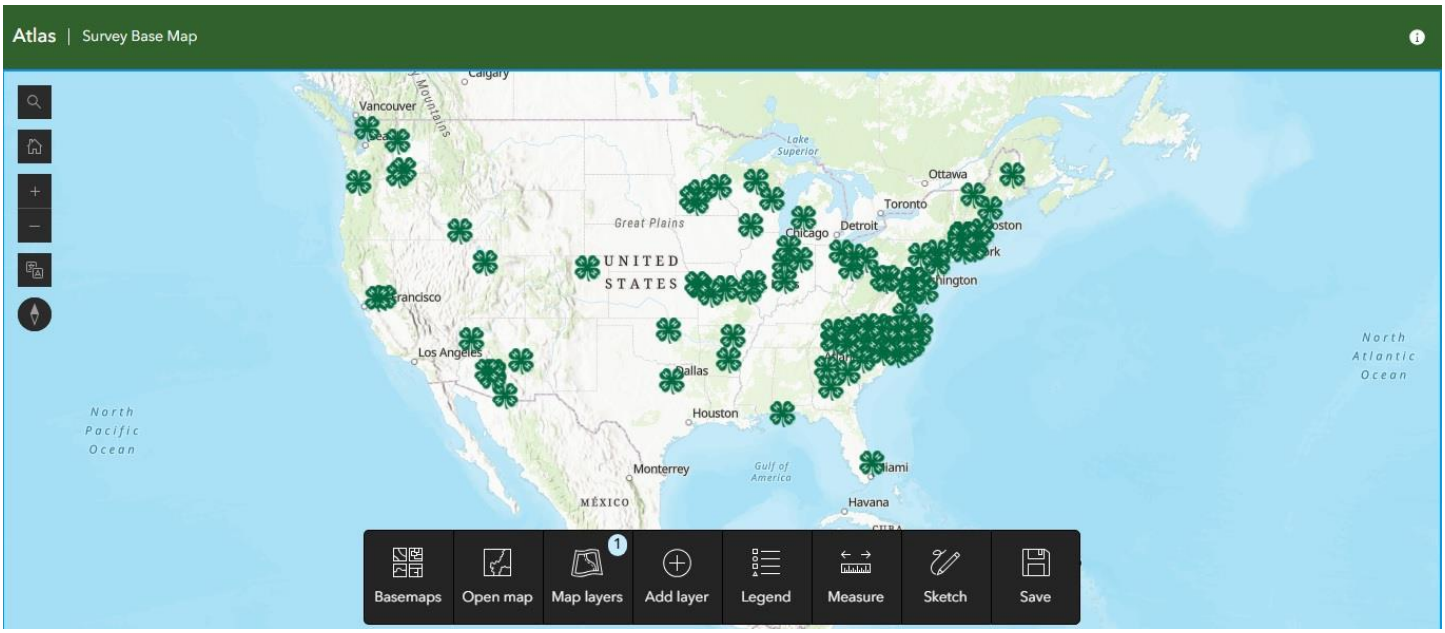
The National 4-H Geospatial Youth Team Commemorates 125 years of 4-H

by Cameron Graham, N4-HGSYTeam member

During 2026-2027, 4-H youth are working with 4-H alumni, staff, volunteers, members and partners to put their county's history onto the National 4-H 125History Map.

The goal is for every county to join in the efforts and contribute a story that helps the 4-H 125History Project create a show-stopping map to display and preserve 4-H history. Good historical entries are specific, supported by evidence, and respectful of the people whose stories are being shared. We are looking for photographs, articles, and club records to create lasting stories that can be stored, retrieved and exhibited for generations to come.

Successful pilot testing at state and county fairs across the USA and strengthened regional partner relationships have launched this mapping initiative into a strong trajectory. Each story we receive is marked by a 4-H Clover on the map. Adopting a measured, milestone-driven approach, the project progresses strategically, adding one clover at a time. Every story captured contributes a vital piece of knowledge to the larger narrative of 4-H and the diverse communities it serves.



Building on this momentum, the National 4-H Geospatial team needs your story to succeed. The team has a comprehensive lineup of national, state, and county events—alongside exhibits celebrating local 4-H history—currently being planned for 2027 and beyond.

However, not only have we been able to give 4-H a tool that helps 4-H preserve its history, but our work has also helped us as well! When asked what being a member of this team has meant to him, team member Hitesh Vuppala said, "Through this program, I've grown not only in my STEM knowledge but also in my ability to communicate, lead, and present my ideas with confidence. I'm grateful for the experiences that have helped me become a stronger 4-H'er and a better team member. Additionally, I was able to build connections with people across New England and invite them to join our national effort. Thank you to the 4-H 125History Project for helping me develop my skills and allowing me to contribute to the national effort of preserving 4-H history, one 4-H'er at a time"

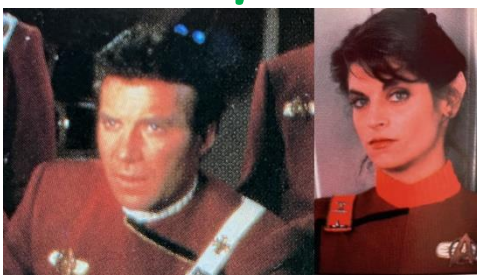
On a personal note, the 4-H 125History Project has been a delightful experience where youth and adult leaders have come together to showcase 4-H's rich history by mapping the country with GIS. I hope you will enjoy the outcome as much as we have enjoyed the process of making it available to you. The 4-H 125History project has given me a great connection to amazing 4-H alumni that share my passion for history, support the effort, and share amazing stories. Without it I wouldn't have had a chance to meet with some of the most dedicated alumni who want the legacy of 4-H to live on!

Visit the website: **https://unitedstates-4h-125historymapping.vercel.app/**. It's the one place everyone can go to get ALL the 4-H information, see the current map, explore the Timeslider map, complete the survey, and learn more about the project and what you can do to help.

Help the world discover the 4-H history around you and help us preserve the 4-H experiences that deserve to be remembered.

Will your 4-H story be a part of the celebration? Who will tell it if you don't?

A Quote of Note:



We learn by doing.
2287 (Stardate 8130.3) Admiral Kirk to Lieutenant Saavik.

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan, released June 4, 1982 by Paramount Pictures.

He's Making a List; He's Checking it Twice…
by Luke Duran. Montana 4-H Alum and Volunteer

In 1984, I was awarded a trip to National 4-H Congress from Montana's 4-H program, for work I had done in a Self-Determined project on energy conservation. As a 4-H'er growing up in Livingston, Montana, I fondly recall the thrill and pride of attending a national event representing Montana alongside my fellow 27 delegates. As a rural Montana kid, it was a magical experience to interact with 1,700 4-H'ers from all across the country in the big city setting of Chicago. That year, the event was held at the Palmer House Hotel, a beautiful venue whose Art Deco interior added an atmosphere of lavish elegance.



The Montana delegation to 1984 National 4-H Congress in Chicago. I'm the skinny kid in the green shirt (middle row, fifth in from the right).

The 63rd National Congress was memorable, with keynote speakers delivering inspired advice on the event's theme, "Building on Experience." The entertainment was wonderful, with comedian Shari Lewis and her puppet Lambchop, and a very young Ricky Martin performing with his group Menudo. We toured the Chicago Art Institute, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, and the Field Museum of Natural History. One highlight was a closing banquet that featured a 4-H holiday pops concert, and a surprise visit from Santa Claus. Mr. Claus has come to town to celebrate with 4-H'ers for many years, in a long-standing tradition dating back to the earliest National 4-H Congress assemblies. I traveled home from that experience both exhausted and inspired.

Thirty-seven years later, I found myself at the 2022 National 4-H Congress, this time as a chaperone for the Montana delegation. Now held in Atlanta, Georgia, this particular gathering was significant, celebrating the 100th anniversary of National 4-H Congress. It was extra special to me that my son Cade was there, too. Cade was one of eight 4-H'ers from across the nation who served on the National 4-H Congress Design Team, which helps plan, coordinate, and host the event.

The energy was vibrant— I was thrilled to see our Montana delegates experience this pinnacle 4-H event with the same enthusiasm and energy that I had felt nearly forty years earlier. It was both fresh and familiar: kids awarded for their 4-H efforts and achievements, inspired speeches, and fantastic cultural tours. But this time, the dances were epic—a thousand kids assembled on the dance floor, masked, emerging from Covid, and ready to let off some steam.

During the closing banquet, I enjoyed the conversations around our table, and proudly watched my son address the assembly. I wondered if Santa Claus would make an appearance and continue his tradition of visiting National 4-H Congress. And then he entered the room, to the loud cheers and whoops of surprised 4-H'ers from across the nation. But this time, as he walked past my table, he did a double-take and stopped.

Santa looked at me, pointed, and said, "You've been here before." You can see my balding head as I looked up at him in shock.



"Yes," I replied, "I saw you in 1984 at National 4-H Congress in Chicago."
"That's right, I remember," he said. "It's good to see you again, glad you're carrying on the 4-H spirit!"

The 4-H'ers around my table looked at me, astounded. Was it some kind of holiday miracle? I'm not sure, but I do believe in Santa Claus. And I believe that the transformative spirit of 4-H empowers our youth.

Happy Holidays!



The National 4-H History Preservation Team Update: Preserving Our Past, Inspiring Our Future

by Tina Veal, Illinois, Secretary, National 4-H History Preservation Team

As we approach **the 125th anniversary of 4-H in 2027**, the National 4-H History Preservation Team is building momentum through exciting initiatives, new partnerships, and opportunities to engage 4-H members, alumni, volunteers, and history enthusiasts nationwide. Our mission remains focused on preserving, celebrating, and sharing the rich legacy of 4-H for future generations.

Showcasing 4-H History in Kansas City

The team hosted an exhibit booth at the 2026 NAE4-HYDP Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, highlighting national preservation initiatives and showcasing projects supported through the National 4-H History Preservation Mini-Grant Program. A new round of Mini-Grants launched November 9, 2026, offering additional opportunities to preserve and share 4-H history nationwide.

The booth also featured the 125th anniversary mapping initiative led by the National GIS Team. This exciting project seeks to document local 4-H history with an emphasis on when 4-H began in counties across the country, creating a visual representation of the organization's growth and impact over 125 years.

Building National Partnerships and Connections

We are seeking a 4-H History State Liaison from every state to strengthen communication, share resources, and connect local preservation efforts with national initiatives. These individuals will play an important role in documenting state and county 4-H history.

Our collaboration with the USDA National Agricultural Library continues to grow. The library plans to host a special 4-H history display in 2027 honoring the organization's 125th anniversary. Additionally, a committee is exploring opportunities to develop a national or traveling 4-H history exhibit to share historical artifacts and stories with audiences nationwide.

The team is also collaborating with National 4-H Council to support national 125th anniversary celebrations and highlight 4-H's historical milestones.

Expanding Our Digital Reach and Resources

Our digital history preservation efforts continue to expand! A new 4-H history timeline has been added to the National 4-H website, along with a link connecting visitors to National 4-H History Preservation resources. Plans are also underway to update the National 4-H History website.

Our social media engagement has been outstanding, with the National 4-H History Facebook page experiencing a 369% increase in engagement! We encourage everyone to follow our Facebook and Instagram pages, share historical memories, and help connect generations of 4-H enthusiasts.

Our The Bridge newsletter committee continues sharing historical stories and preservation updates. For those interested in learning more, recorded National 4-H History Preservation orientation sessions are available on our YouTube channel, providing valuable resources for members and supporters.

Join Us in Preserving 4-H History!

As we prepare for this historic anniversary, we welcome new members, state liaisons, historical contributions, and donations to support national 4-H preservation initiatives. Every story, photograph, artifact, and contribution helps ensure 4-H's remarkable history is preserved for generations to come.

Stay Connected with National 4-H History!

- **General Inquiries & Membership: info4hhistory@gmail.com**
- **The Bridge Newsletter Email: 4hhistorynews@gmail.com**
- **Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/4H.History**
- **Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/4hhistory/**
- **YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@4-HHistory**

Together, we can preserve the past, celebrate the present, and inspire the next 125 years of 4-H!



4-H Fun FACT

For most of its existence, 4-H has been known as a rural youth development education program. Yet, one of the first 4-H-like programs that has been documented was an URBAN club called the "YMCA Foto Rambling Klub". It was organized at the Elmira, Chemung County, New York YMCA by staff member Rufus Stanley who a few years later became the county's first 4-H Educator. The club's first member was W. B. Rogers, who signed the club's constitution on July 3, 1886.



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!

We welcome all stories about our 4-H history. The Editorial Board reviews all submissions and determines if, and when, a submission will be published. Submissions should be approximately 500 words in length. The Editor reserves the right to edit all submissions. The Editor will work with the author when changes are needed. Authors will be asked to review their article and give final approval before it is published.

Send your articles, questions, and comments to: 4hhistorynews@gmail.com. Please note that this is a **new email address**, different from the address that was listed in this newsletter prior to 2026.

To visit this edition of The BRIDGE and all previous editions of the National 4-H History Preservation Team's newsletters online, scan this QR code or visit: ***https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/Newsletter/*** .

Scan this QR code or visit: ***https://www.instagram.com/4hhistory*** and join the National 4-H History Preservation Team on Instagram

4HHISTORY

The official Newsletter of the National 4-H History Preservation Team
https://4-hhistorypreservation.com/Newsletter/

Thanks for reading The BRIDGE. Look for our next issue February 15, 2027!



The BRIDGE Editorial Board:
Sue Benedetti, Gwen El Sawi, Tom Tate, Jane Jopling, Bonita Williams, Betty Gottler, Linda Horn, Deborah Reyome, Ron Drum