



Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists start 4-H SPIN Clubs in Tazewell County

This spring, Tazewell County 4-H welcomed two new Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs. The Junior Master Gardener SPIN Club was led by Master Gardeners, Trudy Yazujian, Janine Donahue, and Ellen Denler while the Junior Master Naturalist SPIN club was led by Master Naturalist Brittany Chambers. Both clubs promoted environmental stewardship through hands-on, nature-based education. Interactive activities and games helped members learn about nature and the role they play in it.

A 4-H SPIN Club is a group of youth ages 8 to 18 who gather to explore a topic of interest. Typically the topics align with one or more 4-H projects in which members can further develop over a span of time, as well as create exhibits for the annual 4-H Show.

Bringing their gardening experience and passion for teaching youth, the three Master Gardeners taught club members about growing fruits and vegetables, soil composition, seeds, native plants, and pollinators. Meetings were mostly held at the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition, Education, and Supplemental Food Program (WIC) Garden at the Tazewell County Health Department. During one meeting, a member spotted an insect that she was excited about using in her 4-H Entomology project.

Insects were also a part of the Junior Master Naturalist SPIN Club. Using Brittany's experience and enthusiasm for nature and exploration, she led a group of youth on hikes through woods, took them fishing, and invited guest speakers to visit her club. The Junior Master Naturalist club focused on topics such as rocks and fossils, bird migration, ecosystems, and aquatic life just to name a few.

When asked about what made these volunteers say yes to becoming SPIN Club leader, Brittany and Trudy were both quick to respond. Brittany replied, "I want kids to be familiar with and to become good stewards of the natural world." While Trudy shared that she "loves watching youth go through the discovery process when they are doing something they have never done before."

Youth experiences like these are one of the ways that Extension volunteers give back to the community. These enthusiastic and knowledgeable leaders may have inspired these youth to become not only good stewards of the land but future Extension Master Volunteers.

SPIN Clubs are just one way youth can get involved in the 4-H program. The variety of 4-H programs offer youth a safe place to learn skills and knowledge, develop positive character traits, and build friendships with youth of all ages.



Extension Master Gardeners Trudy Yazujian and Janine Donahue teach soil composition during a Junior Master Gardener 4-H Club meeting held at the WIC Garden in Tazewell County. This SPIN Club, along with the Junior Master Naturalist 4-H Club were new this year.



Extension Master Naturalist and 4-H SPIN Club leader Brittany Chambers climbs a tree with several of the youth from her club.

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