

Mercer County 4-H Honors a Century of Service by the Hamlet Handy Helpers 4-H Club and 50 Years of Leadership by Joyce Smith



JOIN US TO CELEBRATE TWO
IMPORTANT 4-H MILESTONES



100 Years Old!
**HAMLET HANDY
HELPERS 4-H CLUB**

50 Years of service!
JOYCE SMITH

OPEN HOUSE | WED JULY 12 | 1 - 2 PM
EXHIBIT HALL, MERCER COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
CAKE & PUNCH WILL BE SERVED

Joyce Smith, Making a Positive Impact for 50 Years

For five decades, Joyce Smith has wholeheartedly embodied the 4-H pledge as an unwavering leader in Mercer County. Her dedication has touched the lives of hundreds of youth, guiding them towards success and shaping them into future leaders and contributors to their communities.

Joyce's own 4-H journey began in the 1970s when her children joined 4-H, igniting her passion for volunteering. The Smith family became members of the Peppy Partners and eventually joined the Saddle Teens Club in 1975. Saddle Teens, a club focused on community service and horses, perfectly aligned with their family values. As the club's early leaders, Myrna Adamson, Del Denson, and Ron Partlow laid the foundation, and Joyce and Myrna eventually became the primary leaders.

Joyce's love for serving youth, her community, and the 4-H program only grew stronger with time. After Myrna's passing, Joyce ensured that the Saddle Teens 4-H Club continued the tradition of community service initiated by her dear friend. Over the past four decades, Joyce has successfully secured numerous grants for Saddle Teens, empowering the club to make a positive impact on the community year after year.

Under Joyce's guidance, the club has received numerous Illinois 4-H Excel Awards for community service and has been honored with the Club of the Year Award many times. As Joyce herself proudly proclaims, her journey is far from over.



"Hamlet Handy Helpers: A Century of Community Service"

One hundred years ago, in 1923, a group of like-minded individuals gathered in Hamlet, Illinois, to establish the Hamlet Handy Helpers 4-H Club. Originating as the "Hamlet Break Club," this passionate group, led by Miss Martha Schriver, embarked on a journey that would shape the club's enduring legacy for generations to come.



Over the course of its first 14 years, the club experienced transformations that reflected the evolving interests of its members. From the "Hamlet Bread and Button Club" in 1924, emphasizing baking and sewing, to the "Stitch and Sew Club" in 1928, where needlework and sewing skills were honed, the club consistently adapted to meet the changing needs and passions of its members. In 1937, the name was officially changed to the "Hamlet Handy Helpers 4-H Club," a name that has stood the test of time.



Throughout the decades, the Hamlet Handy Helpers 4-H Club has remained an enduring symbol of dedication and service. Influential leaders such as Annabelle Gray, Agnes Marie Fassett, Doris Unterkircher, Mrs. Don Close, and Mrs. Charles Wood played pivotal roles in fostering an environment where young hearts could flourish within the 4-H community.

As years passed, the Hamlet Handy Helpers 4-H Club continued to thrive, thanks to new leaders like Mrs. Maurice McCutchan and Mrs. Burris Ruggles, who carried the torch of leadership and instilled values of community engagement, personal growth, and the pursuit of knowledge.



In 1950, the Hamlet Junior Farmers Club emerged as a sibling club, led by Robert Fuhr and Lee Gray, catering to the interests of aspiring agriculturists. Some of the first members were David Close, Maurice Waugh, Jim Westphal, and John Krantz. The club was still active in 1976 under the leadership of Lee Gray and David Close with about 20 active members.



Today, the Hamlet Handy Helpers 4-H Club is guided by a remarkable quartet of leaders: Kathy Gray, Chris Zippe, Jason Monson, and Brenda Close. They carry forward the legacy of service, embodying the club's core values while embracing the challenges of the 21st century. Their dedication and vision have not only ensured the club's ongoing success but have also earned them recognition, such as the prestigious Illinois 4-H Community Service Award received in 2023.

The Hamlet Handy Helpers 4-H Club stands ready to embark on its next century of service. Inspired by a rich history and fueled by a shared passion for making a difference, the club continues to leave an indelible mark on the lives it touches. With a spirit of unity and purpose, the Hamlet Handy Helpers will undoubtedly thrive, carrying the torch of community service into the future.