

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

## ILLINOIS Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER  
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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*4-H excels in preparing youth to speak well and speak confidently. 4-H staff and volunteers offer public speaking learning opportunities at the club, county, and state levels. Avery Blunier is one of the 4-H members who took part in the Peoria County 4-H Public Speaking Contest held in 2019.*

## 4-H Provides Public Speaking Development at the Club, County, and State Levels

Glossophobia is the fear of public speaking. You may not hear that word used very often but the fear is very common....except in 4-H alumni. 4-H excels in preparing youth to speak well and speak confidently. It is an important life skill that lasts a lifetime. 4-H staff and volunteers in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties work to offer members many opportunities to learn and practice these skills at the club, county, and state levels.

The necessary skills associated with being a good public speaker have always been an important part of the 4-H experience and 4-H clubs are a great place to foster a positive, learning environment for youth regarding this subject. Every 4-H member is encouraged to give a presentation each year during a club meeting. 4-H members learn by giving talks and demonstrations at community club meetings, and by sharing information about the skills they learned in a project. They also develop skills by observing other people giving presentations, listening with the intent to understand, and by asking follow-up questions.

But the public speaking skills development opportunities do not stop at the club level. Most counties also offer a county-level public speaking contest. 4-H members who participate in this exhibit opportunity can expect to develop skills for communicating real-life issues to real audiences, learn how to organize and prepare a speech, develop speech delivery skills, learn to present themselves to an audience, and develop self-confidence. When youth teach project skills they've learned in a presentation format, it demonstrates advanced skills and a deeper understanding of what was learned.

In 2019, a total of 19 youth participated in county public speaking contests in the University of Illinois Extension, Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit. Youth presented formal speeches, illustrated speeches, and other works such as reciting prose, poetry, short stories, or theatrical presentations. Various presentation styles require similar skills but are designed to meet the interests and age-appropriate levels of the member. Volunteer judges provide constructive criticism and advice to help youth develop their skills.

At the county contests, top presentations are selected to move on to the state-level contest. Of the seven unit members who were able to attend the state contest, three received special recognition for their excellent public speaking and presentation skills.

4-H teens are also given the opportunity to attend state-level training and become Speaking for Illinois 4-H Ambassadors. In addition to advanced public speaking skills, the ambassadors learn how to interact with State Legislators and high-level stakeholders, present themselves in a professional manner, and share their personal 4-H story. Carrie Gill, Peoria County, and Ashleigh Janssen, Tazewell County, were 2019 Speaking for Illinois 4-H Ambassadors.



Photo by Cathy Ludolph / Illinois Extension

These are examples of the formal public speaking trainings that happen in 4-H. There are many more informal ways 4-H members develop their public speaking skills, learn to be good listeners, and become confident communicators.