

## EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

# I ILLINOIS Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER  
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*Even while following social distancing guidelines 4-H members continued to service others. They sewed over 150 masks for medical facilities and made special efforts to connect with and encourage residents in supported living centers by sending cards, writing pen pal letters, and creating decorations.*

## 4-H Members Continue to Serve Others Even During Shelter-in-Place and Social Distancing

“I pledge my hands to larger service...” is part of a pledge that 4-H members have said for many generations. Service to others is one of the main pillars of the 4-H program. 4-H members participate in service projects year-round through their clubs, county, and state-wide opportunities. Typically service projects include face-to-face interactions with others in their communities. Throughout March, April, and May, 4-H leaders and club members in University of Illinois Extension, Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit found creative ways to meet the needs of their communities while following the social distancing guidelines.

One of the first calls-to-action 4-H members received was the request to sew masks for local essential workers. 4-H members and 4-H staff responded and sewed over 150 masks for local hospitals, senior centers, and first responders. According to Bri Bohnnan, these masks came at a critical time for Grand Regency supported living center, and their staff were overjoyed to receive them.

Many 4-H clubs in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit have ongoing connections with local assisted living centers and senior groups and have made extra efforts to stay connected with the residents so they don't feel socially isolated. Alicia Arabje, internal medicine and geriatrics specialist at John Hopkins states that “Social distancing doesn't have to mean isolation or loneliness. We need to keep older adults safe, but also keep in mind that social isolation can have a negative impact on older people's immunity and mental health.” (Hopkinsmedicine.org, 2020)

Twelve members of the Tazewell County 4-H Federation group made cards and wrote letters to the 69 residents of Apostolic Christian LifePoints in Morton. 4-H volunteer and mom, Pam Chism works at LifePoints and delivered the cards. She said the cards and notes instantly brought smiles to the residents.



The Peoria Clovers 4-H Club had been meeting with the seniors at the Grand Regency supported living center since fall of 2019. The 4-Hers and residents usually enjoy bingo together and the 4-Hers make a point to share about their 4-H projects with the seniors. However, since they are no longer able to meet in person, 4-H members started a pen pal program with 15 residents. They exchanged notes and letters, drew encouraging chalk drawings on their driveway for residents and staff, and made encouraging posters to hang in their hallways.

Especially during these challenging times, it is inspiring to see 4-H members reaching out to others to pledge their hands to larger service for their club, their community, their country and their world.