



## EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# 4-H Spark Camp Provided Interactive, Skill-building Activities Virtually

Hands-on, experiential learning is at the core of the 4-H program. When programs were transitioned to virtual, local 4-H staff developed an innovative program called 4-H Spark Camp that upheld the 4-H learning style that youth and their families could do together at home.

"During the worst of the pandemic schools were closed, youth activities were cancelled, and people didn't want to risk exposure by going anywhere," explained [Emily Schoenfelder](#), 4-H youth development educator. "Kids were bored, and parents were at their wits' end. They needed something to do. Something fun for kids and low-stress for parents."

Spark Camp was a series of virtual, hands-on workshops taught by 4-H volunteers, staff, and teen leaders as well as professionals from several community partners such as the [Society for Women Engineers](#) and [CeMaST](#). All project supplies and materials were provided for the hands-on workshops. Funding for materials was provided by the [Tractor Supply Company Paper Clover](#) campaign. At the time of the workshop, youth and families could log in to the video call, open their kit of materials, and participate in interactive, skill-building activities.

An added benefit to this program approach was that additional family members could join the youth as they learned how to complete a project or do an experiment. Post-program surveys indicated Spark Camp helped 62% of respondents feel more connected to a friend and 74% feel more connected to a family member.

One family provided an excellent summary, saying, "I loved this as a parent and my 4-Her did as well. The whole experience was beneficial. Getting more comfortable with video conferencing and interacting. Learning new skills."

There were 34 workshops offered across three sessions. Over 140 young people registered to attend, with youth registering for an average of four workshops each. Examples of workshop topics included:

- Cupcake Decorating
- Pet Care
- Flower Arranging
- DIY Electromagnet
- Basic Hiking Survival
- Chemical Reactions to Fake a Volcano
- Summer Garland
- Butter, Ooblek & Slime: Non-Newtonian Fluids

When surveyed about their experience, 98% of respondents said they tried something new while 97% indicated that they wanted to continue learning about the topics covered.



Photo provided by Spark Camp participant

*A proud Spark Camp participant shows off her completed holiday wreath she created thanks to the instruction of 4-H volunteer Marie Lindahl. This was one of 34 workshops offered through the 4-H Spark Camp virtual program. The innovative program maintained the hands-on, experiential learning that 4-H is known for and allowed youth and their family members to learn together at home. Supply kits were provided thanks to funding through the Tractor Supply Company Paper Clover campaign.*

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