



## EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

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## 4-H Dairy SPIN Club offers a unique opportunity for youth to gain life skills and learn more about agriculture

There are some things that you can't learn from a book or in school. You need to experience it firsthand to understand the full scope, and farming is one of those things. For the past nine years, Peoria County's Neighbor Kids Dairy 4-H Special Interest (SPIN) club has taught youth of all ages life skills such as work ethics, responsibility, safety awareness, communication, problem solving, caring for others as well as a better understanding of the agriculture industry and where our food comes from.

Peoria County farmer and 4-H alum Fred Rosenbohm of Linden Hills Dairy Farm shares his love and knowledge of dairy farming with youth in the 4-H dairy SPIN club. The majority of youth that participate in this special interest club are green hands to farming and livestock. In this club, youth have the unique opportunity to experience the many facets of dairy farming with hands-on activities and research projects.

A major goal is to learn about the importance of milk, what goes into producing milk, and caring for dairy cows. A few of the research topics youth explore include dairy breeds & origination, characteristics of different breeds and terminology, nutrition for all ages of cattle, health and vaccination programs for calves, quality of milk, how price is determined, and marketing or promotion of dairy products.

A few of the hands-on activities in which youth participate include feeding, tattooing, de-horning, and vaccinating cattle, properly milking cows, showing animals, and properly haltering, tying, clipping and grooming animals. A bonus feature of the club is that the youth demonstrate the skills they've gained by showing a dairy cow at the Peoria County 4-H Show.

Kassie Haage a nine-year dairy SPIN club member described how the members learn time management skills. "We have to make sure our cows are trained and clipped before the show. In addition, we learn the values of leadership. Each time we come to the farm, we learn how to work together as a team and how to be the most effective with the time presented. We are accountable for helping each other get the work done while still enjoying the experience."

"The agriculture world is so important in all of our lives," stated Cathy Ludolph, 4-H program coordinator. "It provides things we use on a daily basis and often times take for granted such as the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the fuel that powers our lives. I believe for youth to have this rare, special opportunity to experience farm life firsthand will change the way they see food. Food now becomes the result of hard work, kind of like a reward and not just something that comes from the grocery store. I also think you have greater respect for those that provide our food when you know first hand the hard work that goes into growing it."

4-H offers youth a wide variety of opportunities to explore new interests, meet new people, and develop skills that provide a solid foundation for happy and productive lives.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

*In Peoria County, youth experience the many facets of dairy farming with hands-on activities in the Neighbor Kids 4-H Dairy SPIN Club. 4-H SPIN or Special Interest Clubs focus on a single topic and offer a new way for volunteers to share their knowledge and skills with youth. Club member Kassie Haage is pictured showing one of the dairy cows she worked with at the Peoria County 4-H Show in 2019.*

### Cathy Ludolph

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