



# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## 4-H Federation Members Develop Leadership Skills by Offering Encouragement

The best leaders are those who also serve others. 4-H offers a wide variety of opportunities for youth to develop those servant leadership skills. The four 4-H Federation groups in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties have worked hard over the past year encouraging others through 12 various service projects and special events, which also provided an avenue for the teens to build their leadership skills.

The 4-H Federation program has been around for many years with a goal to allow teen 4-H members to develop leadership skills by planning service, social, and educational events at the county and multi-county level. They serve as youth volunteers, educational program extenders, ambassadors, and mentors for younger members. Though Federation has always provided exceptional leadership skills development, the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic allowed them to adapt and grow in new ways.

This year, the need for connection caused by the isolation of the pandemic was acutely seen and felt by Federation members in the University of Illinois Extension Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit. As such, they decided to focus their efforts on spreading encouragement throughout the community and creating opportunities for engagement for other 4-H members. This took many forms, including:

- The creation of 70 greeting cards for a local assisted living facility, ensuring that each resident received one.
- The production of the videos, [Encouragement for All](#) and [Virtual Fair Project Tour](#), to support fellow 4-Hers and the community at large. Together, these videos have been viewed over 2,500 times.
- Organized a community-wide sock drive to benefit a local crisis center.
- Sewed 30 stockings and sent holiday greetings through Operation Santa.
- Planned and facilitated county-wide virtual 4-H events, such as Family Fun Night, Virtual Fair Reunion, and Virtual Awards Ceremony.

Throughout these efforts, Federation members have honed vital leadership skills, such as problem-solving, flexibility, empathy, and innovation. When asked about their experience in 4-H Federation, 95% of respondents indicated it has helped improve their leadership skills and 100% said the ideas and opinions of young people are heard. One young person went on to say, "I've only been in Federation for one year but it was very fun despite all of the Zoom meetings and I enjoyed being able to participate. I love 4-H and I love helping with all of the fair things and helping the community with our service projects. I believe now that I have this position I can help educate the younger kids much better."

Another member stated, "I believe 4-H Federation has impacted my life greatly. I have met some great people who show that sharing your opinion is not a bad thing. I used to be really shy and afraid to speak up. Now I feel more comfortable with speaking out loud and better at helping people, such as giving tips."

To learn more about leadership in Illinois 4-H, visit [4h.extension.illinois.edu/programs/leadership](https://4h.extension.illinois.edu/programs/leadership).



*4-H Federations in the four-county unit led 12 service projects and special events in the past year that helped fill a need in the community and provided opportunity for the teens to improve leadership skills. One of the projects was a sock-drive led by Mason County Federation. Nearly 800 pairs of socks were collected and donated to the Fulton-Mason Crisis Center. The Federation members planned logistics, coordinated with local businesses, marketed efforts to their peers, and monitored donations to foster generosity throughout the community.*

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