

EXTENSION
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Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell



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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
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Research indicates public speaking skills are the top life skill learned through 4-H. Pictured is Eden S., Tremont Co-op Junior 4-H member addressing the audiences' questions following her talk and demonstration.

4-H Clubs Instill Public Speaking Skills In Youth Of All Ages Through Talks And Demonstrations

Within a 4-H club, youth annually give talks and demonstrations to their peers as part of their club involvement. Through these experiences, members gain confidence in their public speaking skills.

Katharine Girone, Tazewell 4-H Program Coordinator recalls her time in 4-H. "One of my earliest memories of 4-H is standing in front of my club with over 25 pairs of eyes on me. There was this immediate feeling of horror, but at some point in my demonstration, I realized I knew exactly what I was doing. Fast forward 20 years later, and one of my favorite things to see at 4-H club meetings are the talks and demonstrations."

Talks and demonstrations are intended as a way for 4-H members, ages 8-18, to share with their peers a skill or topic they are learning within their 4-H project area. Based on an Illinois 4-H survey conducted in 2017 of more than one-third of its members, 93% said they "share learning with others" because of their 4-H club experience. Some examples of talks and demonstrations include animal care, making a food item, how-to demos, and many others. In addition to the life skills developed through the actual presentation, 4-H members and Cloverbuds (ages 5 to 7) also gain from audience participation during the question and answer time.

"Our 4-H club leaders use a variety of techniques to help their members develop their skills and confidence when it comes to public speaking," mentioned Girone. "I recently attended a club meeting where the leader arranged for the younger 4-Hers to give their talks to the Cloverbuds. It is not as intimidating as presenting to the older kids and a great way to build their self-esteem."

According to a study titled "A Comparison of 4-H and Other Youth Development Organizations in the Development of Life Skills", 4-H alumni ranked public speaking skills as the number one life skill they were taught by 4-H. The study was looking to better understand how 4-H alumni attribute their life skills to membership in 4-H and other youth development organizations.

Jorgi Dupureur, Tazewell 4-H member, offered this insight on why she feels talks and demonstrations are important to 4-Hers. "They give us (4-Hers) more opportunities for speech experience in the safety of your own 4-H club. Your club knows you and wants to help you, so when you do present to a large outside audience, you will be better prepared."



Photo by Katharine Girone, U of I Extension

There are many life skills developed through 4-H and the talks and demonstrations are no exception. Members learn how to organize their thoughts and think on the spot, plus gain confidence through these presentations. The takeaways from talks and demonstrations are public speaking skills members can apply to life outside of 4-H and into adulthood.