

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

ILLINOIS Extension

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Madelynn Goza, member of the Kountry Kritters 4-H Club had the opportunity to spend time doing crafts, such as basket weaving, with the residents at The Lodge at Manito. The intergenerational experience gave youth insights to help them relate to older adults and understand the implications of aging.

Mason County Kountry Kritters 4-H Club Meet for an Intergenerational Experience

Kountry Kritters 4-H Club in Mason County is one of many 4-H clubs throughout the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit that has made special efforts to connect 4-H club members with adults living in assisted living facilities. The University of Illinois 4-H youth development program recognizes community service plays an important role in developing good citizenship. Community service to older persons is a meaningful way to teach our youth that they can be productive and useful members of the community.

The Lodge at Manito, an assisted living and memory care community, hosted members of the Manito Kountry Kritters 4-H Club during their fall and winter 4-H club meetings. Club leaders and members worked to plan craft projects for youth to teach the senior residents. The goals were for seniors and youth to learn from one another while improving social skills, having fun, and working hand-in-hand to complete a project together.

4-H members paired up with a senior resident to teach and work through the project steps, some of the which took multiple meetings to reach completion. The small projects, such as laundry basket weaving, pillow stuffing, and picture painting, became much more than a craft time. It became a socializing, learning, and adaptation time. These projects helped to aide in cognitive stimulation of the seniors as well as broadened the social circles of the youth.

In addition to cognitive and memory matters, youth learned quickly that they needed to adapt to their senior partner's sensory skills in working through the projects. They had to aide with dexterity or mobility issues and hearing or vision impairments.

Club leader Dinah VanDelinder comments that "to see the head, heart, and hands of the 4-H pledge in action through this collaboration has been uplifting to watch. Seeing the faces of the residents light up when they see the 4-H members is proof enough that our club's craft projects have been a success!"



According to the Gerontological Society of America, development of cross-age friendships could dissipate the fears that children have of old people and challenge biases that old people have toward contemporary children and adolescents. The club's activities at the home is an example that these fears and biases can be overcome. Eight year old member, Cozette Marte said, "It was like family time, doing things together."

Eleven year old Madelynn Goza made a special connection with resident, Milton. She worked with him each time the club visited. She shared, "Helping the residents at the Lodge has had a big impact on me. I have gained confidence and found some courage to go on my own to help someone else." Milton enjoys the projects and smiles big when he sees her.