

Georgia 4-H Leadership in Action



Georgia 4-H Leadership in Action (LIA) recognizes 4-H'ers who identify needs in their communities and then conduct service projects, activities, or awareness programs that they believe will help meet those needs. Most commonly, Leadership in Action participants are the driving force behind and have ultimate responsibility for these service projects, with county Extension staff and fellow 4-H members providing support. One way LIA recognizes and rewards deserving 4-H members is through the awarding of grants each year to help 4-H'ers further develop or expand their service project. 4-H'ers must apply for the grant and detail how they intend to use the funds. It is impressive and inspiring to hear how Georgia 4-H'ers are using their Leadership in Action grants to make a difference around the state.

Evie Woodward, an 11th grade 4-H'er from Coffee County, was surprised to learn that one out of every four children in Georgia belong to a family that is food insecure. She knew she had to take action, though, when she discovered that 99.4% of students at a local school were considered economically disadvantaged and often didn't have enough food when away from school. So, Evie founded "Bagging Hunger." She organized fellow 4-H'ers to collect snacks, assemble bags of food, and deliver them to that school for kids to take home. Since the project's inception, Evie has distributed thousands of food bags, or "tickets to a full stomach," as Evie calls them.

This past summer, Evie was awarded a LIA grant of \$500. An actress and musician, herself, Evie wanted to showcase local talent in a variety show that would serve as a platform to raise community awareness about the issue of food insecurity and increase community participation in her project. She used her wits, negotiation skills, and the \$500 grant to secure a venue, recruit lots of talented acts, and garner the support of local businesses.

Evie said, "I had no idea how much work putting together such an event would actually take, but I couldn't be more pleased with the results!" A massive crowd turned out to enjoy the show, and by the end of the night, Evie had managed to turn that \$500 grant into more than \$7,600 that she intends to use to buy more food and materials to reach more students, especially through the summer. She may also have inadvertently discovered another community need, adding, "I lost count of how many audience members came up to me after the show, saying that the area could use more fun community events like this."

Beck Glover, an 11th grade 4-H'er from Coweta County, saw a need for new backstops for his local 4-H BB team. He discussed plans with his coach, researched how to build backstops, and determined supplies needed. Beck sought and received sponsorship from local organizations and individuals, promoting target sports in the process. He and fellow 4-H'ers built 30 adjustable, easy-to-store target boxes that have proven invaluable to his team.

Like Evie, Beck went on to apply for and received a \$500 LIA grant to help him continue his project. At the same time, the Fulton County 4-H Club at the Atlanta History Center was trying to start a BB team at that location but was having trouble figuring out where to find the funds and expertise needed to buy or build target boxes. Beck realized this was the perfect opportunity to help spread the joy of S.A.F.E. shooting sports and share the unique skills he had already developed through his service project.

With help from his father and the LIA grant award, Beck was able to buy necessary materials and begin constructing backstops. In the end, he donated 14 target boxes to the Atlanta History Center's 4-H BB Team. Laurie Murrah-Hanson, Fulton County 4-H Agent, noted, "Honestly, I really don't know what we would have done without Beck and his dad. Those target boxes were just what we needed."

The awarding of grants is but one way that the Georgia 4-H Leadership in Action program encourages young people to become more actively engaged in addressing community needs. Leadership in Action also offers opportunities to receive local, district, and state recognition, to compete for scholarship money or a trip to Washington, DC, and to earn Master 4-H'er status. Georgia 4-H would like to thank Mr. Jayson Dukes, Brantley County 4-H Alumnus, whose generosity supports Leadership in Action. To find out more, contact your county Extension office.