
Title: Georgia 4-H Junior/Senior Project Achievement Prepares Youth for the Workforce

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Summary: County 4-H Extension personnel, AmeriCorps State and VISTA Members, Georgia 4-H volunteer leaders, district coordinators, and state specialists worked together to promote and host Georgia 4-H Project Achievements through area, district, and state competitions for 4th – 12th graders. A survey of 458 Junior and Senior 4-H'ers reported better preparedness for the workforce, increased communication skills, and mastery of public speaking.

Situation: According to the U.S. Census, 62.4% of the population aged 16 and up were in the civilian workforce from 2013-17. While 86.3% of those aged 25 and up had at least a high school degree, and 29.9% had at least a college degree from 2013-17, Georgia businesses and organizations need new hires to also have employable soft skills, such as communication skills, public speaking skills, and other workforce preparation. Georgia 4-H is strategically positioned with partnerships with local school systems and reach over 200,000 youth annually. UGA Extension and Georgia 4-H can fill this critical need for elementary, middle, and high school youth through Georgia 4-H Project Achievement.

Response: County 4-H Extension personnel, AmeriCorps State and VISTA Members, Georgia 4-H volunteer leaders, district coordinators, and state specialists worked together to promote and host Georgia 4-H Project Achievements through area, district, and state competitions. In Project Achievement, youth chose a project area of interest, researched a topic, then wrote and presented an oral presentation to others. For Cloverleaf 4-H'ers, students in grades 4-6, this process began at the school, local, or county level (where local Extension personnel collaborated with local school teachers and administrators) to offer the program. Many of those elementary youth then had the opportunity to advance to a district level competition. For Junior and Senior 4-H'ers, students in grades 7-12, students completed project work and service and leadership activities and compiled it into a portfolio illustrating their year's accomplishments. They presented this portfolio of accomplishments, in addition to giving an oral presentation, for competition. Competition began at the club or county level and winners moved onto the district level. Senior district winners moved on to the state level to compete at State 4-H Congress for the title of Master 4-H'er.

Collectively, 4-H Extension personnel, district coordinators and state specialists hosted 14 area contests, 4 district contests, and one state competition, State 4-H Congress. Over 1600 Extension professionals, 4-H volunteers, and teen leaders supported these contests throughout the year. Two-thousand, three-hundred, and nine asynchronous Project Achievement Judge's trainings were completed by Extension personnel and volunteers, receiving a score of 100% on their final assessment. This training quailed adults and teens to serve as coaches, mentors, and/or judges during the year. Two-hundred, sixty-five trained volunteers and faculty/staff judges evaluated youth at Junior/Senior district and state annual contests to determine project winners, fostering an environment for leadership and public speaking development.

Results/Impacts: Collectively in Georgia 4-H, 77,529 youth were instructed about project development and 16,712 completed projects.

A sample of 1806 Cloverleaf 4-H youth completed a survey of their experience at Project Achievement:

- 73% of students correctly identified at least 2 of the 3 parts of a presentation (introduction, body, conclusion).

- 95% of students correctly identified at least 3 of the 6 things they can do to have a GREAT presentation (make eye contact, practice your speech, use a loud and clear voice, research your topic - learn all you can!, say thank you!, dress appropriately).
- 70% of students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that because of Project Achievement they are more confident speaking in front of people.
- 78% of students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that because of Project Achievement they can better prepare a presentation.
- 88% of students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that because of Project Achievement they learned more about my topic.
- 73% of students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that because of Project Achievement they are better at giving presentations.

A sample of 458 Junior/Senior 4-H youth completed a survey noting:

- 92% of students indicated they were better prepared for the workforce because of their participation in Project Achievement.
- 69% of students indicated an increased effectiveness in communication skills because of their participation in Project Achievement.
- 89% of students indicated an increase in confidence in public speaking because of participation in Project Achievement.
- 92% of students indicated that participation in Project Achievement gave them an opportunity to value and practice service for others.
- 66% of students indicated they felt connected to their community because of participation in Project Achievement.

