

Title: Advisory Leadership Committees Improve 4-H Project SAFE

Summary: Georgia 4-H's Shooting Sports program, Project SAFE, reached 12,472 youth in 2018 through clubs, camps and special events. Georgia 4-H offers shooting sports as a vehicle for positive youth development. Like most programs in Georgia 4-H, Project SAFE holds state competitions. In 2018, 1337 youth participated in State BB and Modified Trap Matches while 2209 attempted to qualify. Archery, Rifle and Trap/Skeet/Sporting Clays State Matches involved 1,074 additional youth.

Situation: Managing a program as large as Project SAFE presents some challenges. While coaches are continually reminded that youth development has highest priority, there is a strong competitive component. Hosting state matches for up to 800 youth at a time requires that logistics and procedures be well planned and implemented. Even with precise planning and implementation, there are numerous opportunities for errors in scoring. Volunteer range officials at the large matches (Archery, BB and Shotgun) were responding to the same questions and complaints repeatedly. These issues created longer matches that caused many families to drive home very late at night. Late night/early morning travel is more dangerous.

Response: Project SAFE Archery, Rifle and Shotgun Advisory Committees met to review the entire program in the respective disciplines with a focused attention on the state matches. The Rifle Committee suggested adding lanes and using a different lane assignment system. The Shotgun Committee added stations to the Modified Trap Match to allow more shooters at one time. The Archery Committee suggested changing all distances to match National 4-H Standards. The Archery Committee also developed and led a scoring training session for senior (9th -12th grades) archers. The training was held the night before the competition.

Results: Adding shooting lanes and changing the assignment system shortened the State BB Match from 7 to 6 relays and saved at least an hour. Adding shooting stations at the State Modified Trap match would have shortened the match if not for a record number of shooters recording perfect scores by hitting all 25 targets and moving to shoot-off rounds. Changing target distances to national standards did require more time for archers to move; however, the improvements gained by implementing training and a double scoring system for senior archers reduced the overall time of the match. Shorter matches allowed families to travel home earlier which is safer.

Successful changes have motivated advisory members to develop additional scoring materials to include video and quick reference guides. State 4-H Staff are in the process of developing an online assessment program within 4-H Enrollment to measure knowledge gained by coaches, volunteers and 4-H youth. Youth and adult volunteers who better understand the rules for scoring will lead to fewer questions for range officials and even more efficient matches.