

Leadership in Action

State Finalist Project Summaries

2017

Michaela Brown, Elbert County

Michaela Brown discovered an abandoned nature trail that had become overgrown and littered during the previous five years. Concerned about the lack of natural outdoor space in her area, Michaela inspired and organized her community to clear trails, pick up trash, cut new trails, and clean benches and signs. Her efforts revitalized the Beaverdam Nature Trail, making it a cherished recreational site for her community.

Kamia Caldwell, Clarke County

Kamia Caldwell wanted every girl at her high school to be able to enjoy prom without the financial burden of purchasing a dress. She collected 64 gently used prom dresses from classmates and community members. Kamia displayed the dresses at school for girls to shop, free of charge. "Project Prom," Kamia's dream, has enabled 17 girls to enjoy a magical night in a beautiful dress.

Alexis Carmichael, Lowndes County

Astounded by how many water bottles end up in landfills, Alexis Carmichael decided to revive her school's recycling program. She met with faculty, classmates, and community organizations to acquire and place recycling bins around her school. Since starting "Drink it, Cap it, and Recycle," Alexis has delivered a total of 210 gallons of bottles, cans, and paper to her local recycling plant.

Beck Glover, Coweta County

Beck Glover saw a need for new backstops for his local 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.

Dalton Green, Walker County

Dalton Green founded "Farm to Fork Camp" to enhance the agricultural education that elementary students receive. At camp, youth participated in activities, such as planting fruits and vegetables, observing them grow, touching livestock, and learning about agricultural by-products. As a result of Dalton's efforts, 30 youth learned how food gets from the farm to grocery stores and onto dinner tables.

Ben Murray, Berrien County

After tornadoes devastated his hometown, Ben Murray enlisted peers to assist with disaster relief. He led the group to make and deliver 400 lunches and 100 cases of water. With the help of a dentist's office, Ben collected hygiene products for tornado victims and 4-H campers in

need. He also donated 350 items to an animal shelter. Through his efforts, Ben helped a broken community start piecing itself back together.

Sophia Rodriguez, Liberty County

Sophia Rodriguez has personal experience with the emotional toll that growing up in a military family entails. To support other military youth, she created a “Tie Dye for Troops” lesson plan that encouraged youth to tie dye pillowcases in which each color represented an emotion they felt. The pillows became a source of comfort. Sophia’s program reached 200 youth at Fort Stewart and brought awareness to the struggle of military kids.

Evie Woodward, Coffee County

Learning that one out of every four children in Georgia belong to a family that is food insecure and that 99.4% of students at a local school are considered economically disadvantaged, Evie Woodward founded “Bagging Hunger.” She organized fellow 4-H’ers to collect snacks, assemble bags of food, and deliver them to that school. Since the project’s inception, Evie has distributed 2,000 bags of food, or “tickets to a full stomach,” as Evie calls them, to local youth.

2018

Alexis Carmichael, Lowndes County

Alexis Carmichael was astounded by the amounts of disposable water bottles that were being thrown away instead of recycled in America, so she decided to revive the recycling program at her high school. She began by meeting with the faculty of her school, and then began getting her classmates on board. After visiting different organizations in her community, she was given recycling bins to place around her school so that students and faculty could “Drink it, Cap it, and Recycle.” Since she began this journey, she has delivered a total of 550 gallon bags of bottles, cans, and paper to her local recycling plant.

Rhea Chawla, Hall County

Proper use of seatbelts and airbags likely saved the life of Rhea Chawla’s mother when a distracted teenage driver ran a stop sign and collided with her vehicle. The accident inspired Rhea to want to share with others the importance of practicing proper safety when driving or riding as a passenger and to help educate others about the dangers of distracted driving. So, Rhea became a Road Safety Ambassador for Youth Service America and State Farm, hosting a variety of road safety awareness events and having the opportunity to speak about road safety to diverse audiences, especially teenage drivers, on numerous occasions.

Abigail Cowart, Evans County

In a county where three out of four public school students live at or below the poverty line, participation in extracurricular activities can be difficult for families if they involve too great an expense. However, Abby Cowart realized from first-hand experience with 4-H how important the leadership and learning opportunities provided by such activities are to young people hoping to break the cycle of poverty. She wanted to figure out a way to help make sure that 4-H events would be financially feasible for more youth in her community. Thus, Abby organized a local, annual silent auction with the proceeds allowing Evans County 4-H to offer many summer and district events and activities to youth at a reduced cost.

Victoria Day, Houston County

With school music programs being cut from the classroom and an increase in school violence, Victoria Day realized she could use her love for music and leadership skills to make a difference. She formulated a plan to provide a musical theater program for 31 children in her tri-county area, showing young people how music can positively impact their lives. Additionally, she saw her theater as an opportunity to address other needs of local citizens, like collecting over 750 canned goods at performances for local families and donating more than \$900 in admission fees and sponsorship money to fully fund the unmet need in Senior Performing Arts Piano for Georgia 4-H Project Achievement in 2018.

Caleb Moseley, Bleckley County

Georgia statistics show that 1 in 5 children ages 5-11 have at least one untreated cavity, with this number doubling for lower income families. After learning this, Caleb Moseley wanted to encourage children to take proper care of their teeth. To do so, he developed an action plan that included bringing the issue of childhood dental care to his community leaders, developing a second grade curriculum about dental health, and collecting toothbrushes and toothpaste for local schools and programs. Additionally, he created a superhero named "Mighty Mouth," complete with a costume and coordinating curriculum, to engage the students in a fun and exciting way. He presented his program to 39 classrooms and distributed 1,093 dental hygiene packets to members of his community.

Riley Elwood, Morgan County

Riley Elwood understands the importance of STEM education and believes that making science and math fun and interesting through robotics programming can help students learn and get excited about STEM careers. He organized a robotics project club for his local 4-H program and formed a partnership with the Morgan County Schools STEAM program to broaden his reach. He has developed several different curricula, such as junk drawer robotics, sphero robotics, and aquabots, and has been teaching these classes at monthly club meetings for the past 3 years. Riley has simultaneously been able to introduce participants to the power of 4-H while increasing their awareness of how science, technology, engineering, and applied math relate to their everyday lives.

Lauren Pike, Walker County

In Walker County, over 1,000 students each year are actively involved in 4-H. With limited extension staff, Lauren Pike wanted to create an atmosphere where each child could receive more individual time with a 4-H representative. To accomplish this, she worked with her local 4-H Agent to create an internship program at her local extension office and then volunteered as an intern to enhance the impact that 4-H can have on children in the community. She helped lead club meetings and teach lessons about STEM, travel safety, and communication to 1,186 students. With Lauren's help, youth and agents have been able to form a deeper connection, which has helped to keep more young people actively involved in 4-H.

Lily Thibodeaux, Chattooga County

The American medical community and public are rapidly discovering the importance and need for robust, accessible, and stigma-free mental health care. Yet, the current mental health system faces many challenges and shortcomings, as Lily Thibodeaux experienced firsthand. She started her project, "Mending Hearts and Minds," in hopes of addressing some of those challenges through education and collecting clothing to donate to Peachford Behavioral Hospital in Atlanta. The clothing would provide patients with more choice in attire besides the same dirty clothes they brought or paper medical gowns. She worked with her local Extension Office, civic organizations, and media outlets to raise awareness about mental health issues and promote



the clothing drive. In the end, Lily's awareness efforts reached over 9,000 people, and she collected 345 bags and boxes full of clothes, totaling nearly 2,000 usable items.

2019

Joshua Drexler, Bartow County

Thanks to Joshua Drexler's leadership efforts, the Pine Log Creek Trail is safer, more educational, and easier to navigate for thousands of area residents. Joshua conducted fundraisers to help purchase identification placards for native Georgia trees and color-coded mile makers that are disability-friendly and can now be used by emergency services to quickly locate lost or injured hikers.

Taylor Rudeseal, Hall County

Taylor Rudeseal organized and taught workshops on soap making at her County Extension Office and at high schools within the Hall County School District. By sharing her passions and talents, and with the help of those she's inspired, Taylor has already been able to donate 438 bars of handmade soap and over 300 pounds of laundry detergent to the less fortunate in her community.

Jazmine Ralston, Gordon County

With community support and the generosity of experts willing to donate their time and talents, Jazmine Ralston created and organized the Double Crown Show Clinic. She wanted to provide a low-cost, high-quality showmanship clinic and contest to help beginning exhibitors in her area. Whether requesting a show permit, recruiting donors, or planning the program, it was worthwhile when Jazmine saw the growth, joy, and successes of participants.

Victoria Day, Houston County

With school music programs being cut from the classroom and an increase in school violence, Victoria Day realized she could use her love for music and leadership skills to make a difference. She provided a musical theater program for 31 children in her tri-county area while collecting as admission over 1,200 canned goods for local families and \$700 to help fund Performing Arts Piano for Project Achievement in 2019.

Madison Brown, Elbert County

Through the heartbreaking process of witnessing her grandfather battle lung cancer, Madison Brown became painfully aware of the loneliness, boredom, and isolation that patients can experience during lengthy treatments. To help alleviate some of these negative consequences, Madison gathered fellow 4-H'ers, local civic organizations, and other school clubs to help create and deliver care packages to cancer patients.

Elizabeth Day, Houston County

For many, crafting is just a fun hobby, but for Elizabeth Day, it became a way to help anxious kids in hospitals and foster care find comfort and relief from their stressful circumstances. Elizabeth created sewing clubs to teach over 150 fellow 4-H'ers and other young people how to make and donate comforting blankets for kids in difficult and stressful situations as part of her "Cuddles for Cuties" project.

Gracie Grimes, Candler County

After being hospitalized, Gracie Grimes found coloring to be a tremendous stress reliever. To help youth in similar situations, she created “Leading and Encouraging A More Colorful Life.” By partnering with local residents and community leaders, Gracie has donated 700 boxes of colored pencils, 350 words of encouragement colored by kids, and 400 coloring books created during one of her community events.

Mason McClintock, Bacon County

Mason McClintock created the Alma Entrepreneur Tour in hopes of providing opportunities for community youth to expand their horizons and envision new possibilities for their future.

Focusing on rural entrepreneurship, the program identifies local entrepreneurs and connects them with area youth while raising awareness about innovation in business and demonstrating how overcoming obstacles can transform passions into possibilities.

2020

Evelyn Day, Houston County

Evelyn Day organized preparedness materials for pet owners during natural disaster situations. Pet PACKs (Prepared Animal Crisis Kits) are designed for pet owners to use as backup supplies for their beloved animals in the event of natural disaster destruction or displacement. Evelyn provided materials to guide pet owners in making pet-friendly evacuation plans, collected donations, and prepared Pet PACKs to assist with immediate evacuation needs. She also donated supplies to animal shelters caring for abandoned animals from these crises.

Stephanie Lopez, Mitchell County

After recognizing that many of her peers and community members were feeling overwhelmed by stress and anxiety, Stephanie Lopez decided to educate the public about healthy and effective ways of coping. Stephanie shared her “HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS” presentation, hung informational posters at Pelham Middle and High School, created and distributed stress management brochures at local libraries, and shared on social media how 4-H has helped her, personally, to cope. Impressively, Stephanie was able to impact over 1,700 people through her outreach efforts.

Grace McBride, Emanuel County

Grace McBride recognized a lack of entertainment and cultural exposure for youth in rural Emanuel County. So, she created a day camp where youth could get involved, be entertained, and be introduced to new cultures and nationalities. The day camp spanned four days, with each day featuring a guest from a different country who would present food, games, and educational lessons about their homeland. Through Grace’s planning and coordination, she was able to expose youth to the culture, cuisine, and customs of countries like Vietnam, Hawaii, Russia, and Ecuador.

Neely McCommons, Oconee County

Less than 1% of plastic bags are recycled properly, and many end up in the ocean where they can be inadvertently ingested by sea life. Neely McCommons wanted to do something in her

community to combat this issue. Neely began a project called “Sea Turtle Saviors” and collected hundreds of plastic bags for upcycling projects such as making friendship bracelets or making sleeping pads for the homeless. Through this project, Neely educated others on how to reduce their plastic waste, including teaching classes on how to make reusable bags out of t-shirts. Not only did she raise awareness about the environmental hazards of disposable plastic bags, but Neely also helped reduce her community’s reliance on them.

Juliette McKinley, Paulding County

As COVID-19 spread, Juliette McKinley realized that the pandemic was taking an emotional toll on youth, causing increased feelings of loneliness and anxiety. To help counter this effect, Juliette offered art classes to youth of all ages that encouraged creativity and inclusion, helped alleviate some of stress and anxiety, and demonstrated the therapeutic value of artistic expression. She spent over 323 hours preparing for and leading art projects and programs for youth of all ages in her area in order to show how art can create mindfulness and can serve as a powerful stress-reliever during particularly challenging times.

Nicholas McKinley, Paulding County

Access to STEM-related classes and activities can be limited for many students with physical or developmental disabilities or with limited financial resources, and Nicholas McKinley wanted to do something about that. Being passionate about all things STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Nicholas wanted to offer all youth in his area an opportunity to participate in STEM classes and to demonstrate how STEM can help young people grow as individuals. So, Nicholas partnered with several organizations, such as the Hanger Clinic, 4-H, and Homeschool Book Lounge, to be able to offer free STEM classes to youth of all ages, regardless of their financial, developmental, or physical disabilities.

Amelia Sale, Oconee County

4-H Summer Camp was the event that really got Amelia Sale hooked on Georgia 4-H. Amelia is also passionate about working with special needs youth, and she soon began to dream of providing more opportunities for those youth to attend 4-H camp. With the donation of jewelry-making supplies, Amelia began creating jewelry to sell online through Etsy and Instagram, and in jewelry stores in Madison, Bogart, and Athens. Thanks to the proceeds from her jewelry sales, Amelia has been able to provide camp scholarships for three youth with special needs.

Kate Vaughn, Bulloch County

When a local middle school special education teacher approached the Bulloch County 4-H Agent about delivering 4-H curriculum to her classroom, the 4-H Agent knew Kate Vaughn was the right 4-H'er for this opportunity. Kate is particularly interested in special education and was eager to help develop and present 4-H programming to this special education class. Before each monthly club meeting, Kate would discuss with her 4-H leader and the special education teacher which topics to cover that would connect with the regular classroom curriculum while providing unique hands-on learning experiences. By establishing an archive of effective lesson plans and resources, Kate created a framework for continued 4-H engagement with this and other special education classes long after her graduation.

2021

Caroline Phillips, Jackson County

Caroline Phillips created a donation drive to collect school supplies for youth in foster care after learning of this need in her community. She reached out to local DFCS offices in her area to find out what specific supplies were needed before utilizing her local 4-H hub and network of personal contacts to create a donation hub and seek donations from the community. Thanks to the public's generosity and Caroline's efforts, much-needed school supplies were delivered to area youth in foster care. In fact, enough school supplies were donated to fully equip 10 youth for the entire school year!

Lily Thomas, Putnam County

After learning about teen dating violence and volunteering with the Putnam County Family Domestic Task Force, Lily Thomas wanted her community to be better informed about these issues. She created programming to increase awareness and educate both classmates and area residents about teen dating violence. With help from her peers, Lily distributed orange awareness ribbons, planned and led "Love Shouldn't Hurt" -- a teen domestic violence awareness program with educational workshops, and led supply drives to support local domestic and family violence shelters.

Gus Federico, Bartow County

Gus Federico saw the potential to turn a blighted area on the grounds of a historic area church into a beautiful oasis for the entire community. After getting approval, Gus sprang into action to recruit volunteers and sought donations of materials that would be needed for the beautification project. By cleaning up trash and debris, prepping soil, washing walls, installing plants, and adding finishing details such as benches, solar lights, and walkways, Gus and the volunteers were able to create a prayer garden at the historic Sam Jones United Methodist Church. The new garden has not only benefitted church members but is open to and has helped beautify the neighborhood, as well.

Juliette McKinley, Paulding County

Juliette McKinley recognized the emotional toll the COVID-19 pandemic was having on youth, causing increased feelings of loneliness and anxiety. In response to this issue in her community, Juliette offered art classes to youth of all ages that encouraged creativity and inclusion and helped alleviate some stress and anxiety. Juliette spent over a thousand hours preparing and leading art programs and projects, promoting art for mental health on social media, and even creating and sharing an art booklet called ARTEMSOL.

Chanthony Andrews Jr., Glynn County

The Brunswick area has a considerable homeless population that is vulnerable to exposure to the elements throughout the year. Chanthony Andrews Jr. wanted to help these individuals to be better prepared for the weather while raising awareness about the challenges they face and sharing ideas for how the community could better assist the homeless. So, he started a service project called "Socktober" to help supply much needed socks to area shelters. With the support

of his 4-H agent, his school, and local partners, Chanthony collected and distributed 929 pairs of socks to help local homeless people stay warm and comfortable.

Jesse Tyre, Bacon County

Jesse Tyre always loved visiting local Head Start programs and schools to conduct read-alouds for the Farm Bureau and local library, but his visits came to a screeching halt with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Determined to continue promoting literacy while exposing young kids to topics such as agriculture, STEM, and 4-H, Jesse created a Facebook read-aloud video series that he later expanded into a YouTube channel. The channel featured engaging read-alouds that were often filmed on sites that tied to the stories, such as blueberry farms or hay fields. He also collaborated with local partners to develop fun, interactive activities to accompany the readings. So far, more than 500 students have taken advantage of these resources.

Shazia Alam, Sumter County

Growing up in an area with a high rate of poverty and an abundance of fast-food restaurants, Shazia realized that many community members lacked access to healthy food. So, Shazia created "Healthy Heroes," a club that helps fellow 4-H'ers and other youth learn about gardening, maintaining a healthy diet, and proper exercise. She developed and led a variety of activities, including helping supply participants with the knowledge, skills, and items needed to grow their own salsa garden, publishing a monthly healthy living newsletter, and involving participants in creating a healthy cookbook for Sumter County. Over 3,000 community members have benefitted from these efforts.

Omarion Smart, Decatur County

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only taken a toll on physical health, but mental health, as well. Omarion wanted to take action to raise awareness about mental health and to provide support and encouragement to help community members, especially the elderly and youth, to combat feelings of loneliness, fear, and grief. He called his project "Campaign for Positive Thinking and Encouragement," and it involved everything from creating and posting inspirational flyers, to presenting a series of youth sermons at his church, to writing a children's book that a fellow 4-H'er illustrated. Through the power of social media, Omarion's messages of positivity and inspiration have reached tens of thousands of people within his community and around the world.