

My 4-H Story

There are a lot of interesting things in the world, there is no room to be typical. Hi, my name is [REDACTED] and I am fifteen years old and a freshman at [REDACTED] High School. This is my seventh year being a member of the Lockwood 4-H in southern Monterey County, and I am very glad to be part of 4-H. When I'm not cuddling with my sheep, grooming my rabbits, or doing arts and crafts, you can find me playing softball or reading a good book. There are always plenty of things to do, but free time makes everything seem much easier! When I was a little kid I already knew my career was going to be focused around animals, and about a year ago it faded from being a large animal veterinarian to an animal behaviorist, which aren't nearly as common. An animal behaviorist diagnoses the odd behaviors animals might have and gets them back to being their normal self. It's still allowing me to be involved with animals, but not spending nearly as much time or money in college.

I took four projects this year: rabbits, sheep, horse, and arts and crafts. Each one of these projects is unique in itself, but overall they have many goals that can affect the others. In my livestock projects, I made the goal of being a leader whenever someone needed help, that way I could be assisting others instead of just focusing on what my needs were. In arts and crafts, I made the goal that by the end of the year, I would have my eyes opened to a whole new world of creativity. Now that the end of the 4-H year has come around, I've come to realize that all of these goals have been achieved. In both sheep and rabbits I am a teen leader and I was able to help younger

members learn how to correctly do showmanship, and in sheep I assisted others when they needed to get into the show ring. I also assisted the leader when he needed someone to take charge for whatever reason. In horse, I assisted my best friend (the teen leader) in showing members how to saddle a horse and how to mount a horse. In arts and crafts, I have seen creative sides that I've never known about. Any time I see random objects sitting around, I wonder about how I could turn it into a great arts and crafts project. After being in 4-H for seven years, I've learned a few skills, and have found them to be useful in all the things I am doing today. From livestock projects, I have learned that hard work and dedication are important to keep the momentum going because there are sometimes bumps in the road (challenges) that will sometimes slow you down. From my other projects through the years, such as sewing, woodworking, record book, and vet science, I've learned leadership and responsibility. Managing time has been huge for me, which started my very first year right before fair came around and suddenly I found out I wasn't prepared. Since 4-H has been with me since the start, I've had a lot of expenses to deal with. My lambs and rabbits both take a lot of money since I have to constantly buy supplements and feed, and upgrades to my rabbit barn have drained a significant amount of money. After some sifting, I have figured out what items I can live without purchasing for my animals, and which I need to limit spending my money for. There were two individuals responsible for my success throughout the years: my community club leader([REDACTED]) who has pushed me from the day I decided to join 4-

H; and my lamb leader, Mike Hardoy, who taught me how to laugh even when it gets hard to juggle everything around. My success came with the help of others, and without them, I would not be where I am today in my career.

Before 4-H, I was a nervous little kid with a lot of energy. I was quiet and loud at the same time without much balance. The first meeting, I saw the president at the front of the room, and she looked really cool and calm. I swore that night I would be like her one day, in control yet lenient for fun things. A few 4-H years later, I have been an officer two times, and am running for President in 2016-17. As a citizen, I have been looking out for places where I can help and assist those in need. I have been both a Junior and Teen leader in my club, and it gives me a huge sense of achievement to know how greatly I have affected the members which I have led. Working with these members has helped me learn that being a leader isn't an easy thing, it has many complications and times where you want to give up, but in the end, there is always a reward, whether it is praise from your leader or a thank you from a member. Although things might seem impossible, there is success for those who persevere.

Leaders come and go, but the best ones will stay in your heart forever. A few will always stand out from the rest, Mike Hardoy, Denise Hardoy, Tami Lander, and the list goes on and on. They are my 4-H family, because I have had so many good times with them and it's hard to imagine life without them helping me every now and

then. People see 4-H as just another organization, but to me, 4-H is the reason I can wake up every morning and know there's something to believe in. I've made friends outside 4-H, but the relationships with some of my best friends all started here. It's great to know that people will always have your back, and when you're down, they'll help you up. A path has been formed from all the projects I've taken over the years, whether it be woodworking, quilting, or sheep. My grades have been kept up while juggling my animals, and my career has been shaped by every animal I have had the privilege to raise, beginning when I was nine years old. There's no great way to explain what being a 4-H member is. One way of saying it could be lifesaving, another could be a way to find lifelong friends, and the last could be a way to make memories which will never die. There's no perfect expression to describe what this organization is, and the only way to really understand is to sign up. From there, you will be shown the greatest time of your life.