

With the spring season comes a sense of renewal. As life around us springs forth again, we get an itch to move, to plant, to play, to get back out into the world. The world of 4-H has been somewhat in its dormant season, between its former Agent moving on to a new adventure and another coming in to start theirs. But now, the seeds of 4-H have been sown again for 2023 and on, and they are sproutin', y'all!

This is just my poetic way of saying that I am Jackson County's new 4-H Agent! My name is Kayla Thomas. I am from Greenville, SC, and graduated from Clemson with a BS in Environmental and Natural Resources. After college, I worked as an environmental educator in the NC piedmont for 2 years. Then, I went to work for NC Cooperative Extension on the coast, where I did water quality and horticulture work. Eventually, I decided I wanted to stay within Extension and find my niche, which felt like 4-H. I also wanted to move back close to home. So, I found exactly what I was looking for in Jackson County Extension, and they found what they were looking for in me.

Fast forward one month, and I am getting settled here. I have become increasingly excited about being the 4-H Agent here, as I am getting to know the community more and learning about the programs we offer. Although we are getting in gear again, there are programs that youth can participate in right now! Here's what is going on in 4-H currently:

- **A Youth Livestock Group** that meets 2nd and 4th Thursdays at Smoky Mountain High School. Learn about the care and feeding of animals, plus showing and judging. All ages welcome!
- **A Youth Leadership Council** for teens that meets 1st and 3rd Sundays at Smoky Mountain High School. Learn leadership skills and provide community service. Ages 14-18.

We are also having a 4-H Meet 'n Greet on April 18 from 5:30-6:30. If you are involved in 4-H (youth or adult) and want to contribute to our program going forward, please come out and join us! This is an opportunity for me to meet folks in our 4-H community, and for you all to meet me! **Also, if you are curious about 4-H and want to learn more, this a great opportunity for you!** We will be discussing what folks would like to see in/bring to our 4-H program. Children will be in a separate room participating in an activity on wildlife while the adults meet. Snacks will be provided to all. Please call our office if your family plans to attend. All are welcome!

I am so glad to be here with you all in Jackson County. Whether it's volunteering, supporting, or getting your kids involved in our programs, I hope you and your loved ones find a place to bloom in Jackson County 4-H!

Kayla Thomas
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