

## 4-H: 2023 Wrapped

As 2023 comes to a close, I want to share the highlights of our 4-H program this past year. Jackson County 4-H has continued to strengthen and grow, and I am proud of everything we have accomplished and explored this year in order to make the best better.

From March to May, 4-H did an embryology program at Summit Charter School in Cashiers. We worked with a class of second graders, and they cared for and monitored chicken eggs and learned about embryonic development. At the end of our program, we successfully hatched seven chicks! I don't think I've ever seen a group of school children that excited in my entire life. Two words... pure joy!

In April, 4-H participated in Conservation Field Days with the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District. At this two-day event, over 250 fifth graders in the county learned about environmental/conservation topics from several local entities like the NC Forest Service, Balsam Mountain Trust, and the Jackson County Environmental Health Department. 4-H had a station on bats. Kids played games where they got to try out being a bat, which included eating 'insects' and 'blood' (don't worry... they were marshmallows and fruit punch).

Throughout the summer, there were many happenings in 4-H World. Our Youth Livestock Group members participated in the Sheep Project, in which they raised lambs and attended livestock clinics to practice showmanship. They then went on to show their lambs in the local fairs in August and September. The campers at Cullowhee Rec Center's summer camp did activities with 4-H every week, in which they learned about our local environment and local agriculture (this included trying different types of tomatoes, a plant scavenger hunt, and meeting a wildlife expert). 4-H'ers also made pendants and necklaces in a wire art class, went gem mining, and snorkeled in the Tuck to look at local fish species. We had a blueberry pie baking contest, too. And of course, we attended 4-H summer camp at both the Eastern 4-H Center in Columbia, and Fur, Fish, and Game Camp at Millstone 4-H Center in Ellerbe (this is a plug for camp next year... join us!).

This fall, the 4-H Outdoor Club had several fun meetings about wildlife (more to come next year), we had *another* pie contest (so much fun, y'all), and held a Christmas tree/wreath fundraiser to raise money for our Youth Livestock Group (thanks everyone for your purchases).

This year has been truly awesome. I have enjoyed getting to know our county's youth, watching them succeed in our programs, and helping them learn new things and just have fun in the process. I have definitely learned from them along the way, myself! We have extremely bright, hardworking, and kind kids in our community, who are eager to learn and passionate about exploring the world around them. I am excited to continue watching them grow in our programs in 2024. Stay tuned for what's coming in the new year!

Happy Holidays everyone.