

Helping Hands

Interns, Program Assistants are Boost for District 4-H Programs

IOLA, Kan. – In past years, Anna Setter experienced only the flurry of activity *during* the Allen County Fair.

But this summer, the Humboldt High School junior found out just how much work goes into pulling off the weeklong event.

“It surprised me how much time it takes and all the preparation to make that week very successful,” said Setter, who was a 4-H summer intern with the Southwind Extension District’s office in Iola.

Many county and district extension offices in Kansas are benefitting from having students like Setter in their offices for summer internships.

The State 4-H office offers internships for Kansas kids to work at an extension office in the state. District offices have a similar program, except they have their own selection process and often hire kids who already live in their community.

“Obviously it’s a great benefit for the interns that are hired,” said Delta George, an agent in the Southwind District’s Fort Scott office. “They get real-world experience in a professional office setting.”

This summer, the Southwind District had a 4-H intern in each of its three offices. There is a high demand for 4-H help during the summer months, so many district offices are capitalizing on the flexibility



they have to use interns and 4-H program assistants.

“We have a 4-H program assistant in each office in the district,” said John Forshee, director of the four-county River Valley Extension District. “It wasn’t something that happened in day one of the district; initially, we had varying levels from no extra help to a situation where most of our 4-H program assistants were actually part-time office professionals at the beginning.”

In Forshee’s case, extra help for 4-H in the district evolved after a former director retired and an agent left for a different job. He said that other needs in the district were still being met, so the opportunity was available to give the district’s 4-H efforts a boost.

He added that 4-H interns and program assistants “have been a wonderful advantage for 4-H in the district and for us as agents. They are the day-to-day voice for 4-H in our office...and that allows agents to focus on educational issues related to 4-H.”

Setter capitalized on her time in the Southwind District to not only learn more about putting a large

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event like the county fair together, but also to develop a community workshop on how to prepare and grill shish-kebabs.

“My big project is food and 4-H, so this was an easy way to incorporate that into my 4-H projects,” she said.

“I plan on going to K-State to study food science, so [the summer internship] gives me that push knowing that I have a [similar] job under my belt. I know that I

can work with people, I can communicate, and I have worked with a food project.”

George says that interns’ summer projects, which are mandatory for students, are often activities that wouldn’t have been offered by extension in the community if not for the internship.

“Our interns have the flexibility to do whatever project or event they want, as long as its educational and it’s open to the entire district,” she said.