

To the Johnson County (JC) 4-H Community,

The October 8, 2015 edition of the Buffalo Bulletin headline read, “*Head of the Class*” with the subtitle “*Pierson named Wyoming Teacher of the Year.*” The Bulletin article, which followed, told of how, when, and why Amy (Martin) Pierson received the prestigious Wyoming Teacher of the Year award. Amy was presented this well-deserved award by Wyoming Superintendent of Public Instruction Jillian Balow via a teleconference presentation.

Superintendent Balow, a Campbell County 4-H alumni and parent of two children who have been in 4-H, participated in the Wyoming Women’s Antelope Hunt Oct.8th-11th. While I was working with Balow at this event, we shared Amy Pierson stories. Both Superintendent Balow and I were delighted for Amy’s selection as Wyoming’s Teacher of the Year and how 4-H played a part in her youth development.

By chance, after many JC youths were on the morning radio for National 4-H week, Amy Pierson was interviewed by Mark Bentley on KBBS radio about her award. Amy spoke of receiving training in project-based learning in Washington D.C. and how she brought these techniques back to train other JC educators. Reading the story and hearing Amy on the radio, who has always been known for her bubbly personality and enthusiasm, reminded me of the importance of project-based learning as it applies to the 4-H model of *learning by doing*. Amy’s teaching methods using project-based learning is the model used by 4-H for over 100 years. Listening to Amy on the radio made me smile and maybe glow a little when I reflected on Amy’s development as a youth in Buffalo. Amy is a JC 4-H alumni and shared much time with my children whether in our 4-H club, 4-H projects/contests, school and club sports, and in other community projects.

As we all know, the primary goal of 4-H is to assist youth in developing life skills that help them live productive and satisfying lives. There are many examples of adults who have achieved this goal who are also alumni of JC 4-H and who have gone on to become community leaders at the local, state-wide and national levels. Amy (Martin) Pierson is a prime example for the kids in JC County to see how important the skills learned in 4-H can be applied later in life. I am proud to have taught and coached Amy while she was at Buffalo High School, but more importantly I am glad she received one of the highest honors a professional educator can earn.

Now that October has arrived, JC can look back on the 2014-2015 4-H year with much to celebrate. We have impressive 4-H alumni, great kids including many state champions, dedicated volunteers, a vibrant 4-H Council, and a deeply caring Fair Board and Livestock Committee. In addition, we have County Commissioners who are interested in moving the JC 4-H program forward, and an extremely generous community, which supported the 2015 junior livestock sale in record book fashion.

When I started as the new JC 4-H Extension Educator only five months ago, I did not know how much I did not know. During these few months of often whirlwind activity, I concentrated on assessing needs and building relationships. As the parent of JC 4-H kids for many years and being a twenty year 4-H volunteer at the state and county level, I came in with a good understanding about 4-H in general. However, the learning curve has been steep when it comes to operational details. The single most important thing I observed has been how deeply parents, leaders, and the

community, in general, cares for our youth. This, to me, is truly what makes the future of 4-H exciting.

The JC 4-H Program Achievement Night annually recognizes youth accomplishments at the state level, including the Honors Awards program, and provides an opportunity to for those that excelled at State 4-H contests to be acknowledged. Elizabeth Downare (our Achievement night emcee) invited many of our youth to come in front of the crowd to receive awards and be recognized for their accomplishments while Adri Ruby engaged youth and adult with minute-to-win-it games.

Another important aspect of Achievement Night is for 4-H Council elections. The elections results for Council officers were Chanda Rule (president), Kristen Hepp (reelected as treasurer), and for the one year appointment as secretary, Cristie Murray.

*A special thanks to the Committee and others who were involved in Achievement Night planning: Elizabeth Downare, Council past president Amanda Hulet (BBQ beef), Dash Inn for donating the buns, Adri Ruby (minute-to-win-it games), and Donna Nelson.

Just as we put closure to the 2014-2015 4-H year, we have also kicked the new year off with **National 4-H Week**. Activities were conducted October 4th - 10th both at the national and local levels to celebrate the impacts 4-H makes in the lives of youth, leaders and their communities. One venue where JC youth promoted 4-H was the KBBS morning radio show with Mark Bentley. Youth members from several clubs went on-air and were interviewed by Mark, who mentioned each morning that his daughter was a 4-H alumni and how important 4-H was for his family. Mark also queried the youth each morning as to how they might improve this coming 4-H year. We all enjoyed Colby Bessler's response as his goal was to dethrone champion Taylor Rives, as we all recognize 4-H as being comprised of friendly competition and acknowledging excellence. Another 4-H week venue used to showcase youth was at the Oct 6th County Commissioners meeting where five youth spoke about their 4-H accomplishments. Thanks Johnathan, Evelynne, and Gregory Conklin, Cassie and Sydney Downare and our JC Commissioners.

To move forward into the new 4-H year **all** involved (clubs, youth, and adults) should be planning now to enroll or re-enroll in 4-HOnline via the Wyoming State 4-H website. While the state office has experienced some delays with the 4HOnline registration system, they emphasize that registering online is an important start up requirement each new 4-H year.

- **4-H Clubs** must renew their charter to recognize their affiliation.
- **Certified Leaders** must enroll or re-enroll via <https://wyoming.4honline.com> at the start of each year and pass a screening every 5 years.
- **Motor Vehicle Records** must be checked every year **via UW Motor Vehicle Records**.

Thanks to all who volunteered during the 2014-2015 4-H year. I look forward to your continued commitment to JC 4-H to make the best better in the 2015-2016 4-H year.



UWE Educator 4-H / Youth Development for Johnson County