



A NEW KIND OF 4-H

The New Year was rocking along, and 4-H was business as usual, as were most things. And then, WHAM! Everybody's normal changed. On March 16, the first Monday of school closures due to COVID-19, I went to work with the thought that I had a week or two worth of work to do before I got bored, not having to race from school to school in order to present 4-H programs. And then a two-hour Zoom conference changed all that and I've been non-stop with a new kind of 4-H ever since.

On that Monday afternoon, I logged onto the first of many Zooms with the seven other 4-H Agents from the SC Midlands region (Zoom is an online means of communicating with many people at once: video, audio, and chat box included.) We all had somewhat similar ideas: what are we going to do with our time, how will we reach our expected number of youths for the year, how can we keep our clubs, projects, and school programs going? It didn't take long before we all came to the same conclusion: we needed to come up with something to be offered virtually, and fast! In less than two hours SC 4-H @ Home was born.

4-H @ Home was created to meet the needs of South Carolina families during the COVID-19 related school closures. The program provides daily, weekday e-mails that include a hands-on lesson. Lessons are designed to provide an educational activity using items commonly found in your home so that a trip to the store isn't necessary. We have also taken into consideration the number of people required to complete the activity in hopes that families can do these together, keeping their social distance from others. Topics included cover the 4-H spectrum: animals and agriculture, natural resources, healthy lifestyles, leadership, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and they are suitable for a range of ages.

As an added incentive, we have asked participants to post photos of their 4-H @ Home activities on social media using #SC4HatHome. Each week we draw a winner from the submissions to receive a free 2020-21 4-H membership and a 4-H prize pack. And that's where we underestimated the reach of this program.

Within the first two hours of opening registration on March 18 we averaged one registration per minute. Not only was the number of youths registering exceeding expectations, but the physical spread was more than we expected as well. Here we are, now a month and 23 lessons into the new 4-H and 4-H @ Home claims more than 2,380 registered youth participants in all 46 SC counties, 46 US states, and 8 countries (USA, Canada, Mexico, South Korea, Japan, Scotland, South Africa, and Germany) on 4 continents! Lessons are submitted by Clemson Extension Agents across the state and on various program teams: 4-H and Youth Development, Forestry, Water Resources, Livestock, and Horticulture. Some are original and some are adaptations of similar programs from other organizations and institutions. While we originally anticipated offering two weeks' worth of lessons, it wasn't long before we realized more would be needed. Now, with no definite end in sight, we have decided to continue our current format of daily lessons through the end of May, switching to a Summer Session format in June. The Summer Sessions will offer something each weekday: lessons, virtual tours, and more, but will have one continuous theme for each week, somewhat like a summer camp. After summer, when restrictions

NEWBERRY COUNTY

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<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/newberry/4h>

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Public Service Activities

are hopefully eased, we plan to offer one lesson each month in addition to potentially publishing a book with all the lessons included.

With any luck, the above paragraphs have piqued your interests. Check it out by visiting www.4hathome.eventrbite.com to register for free. And if you know someone in Alaska, Rhode Island, Nevada, or Vermont pass this information along to them as well. We want to color the map 4-H green. Corona isn't the only thing that went viral!

For more information on Newberry County 4-H contact agent Alana West at awillin@clemson.edu or 803.768.8442. In addition to 4-H @ Home, we are still taking registration for some of our independent study projects like poultry, rabbits, and gardening, and our summer camp line-up was just announced. You can find that on our website: www.clemson.edu/newberry/4h.

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