

Before speech: Hello everyone, my name is Madalyn Meckle and I have been asked to talk a bit about 4-H today.

4-H speech

Madalyn Meckle

"I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my club, my community, my country, and my world."

That is the saying all of us 4-H'ers know so well, say so often, and actually use it without us even knowing it. I have been in the 4-H program for about 7 years, and the more I reflect on that very saying the more I think about how even though we say it with such habit, that it is practically engraved in our brain, thinking nothing about it when we say it, but it reminds me how much we actually use it.

When I think about the *"I pledge my head to clearer thinking"* I immediately see an image pop into my head, a blank thought bubble which consumes my brain. You may see something completely different, and that is 100% ok, because I think the 4-H motto is something that you can all take differently, but it is all working for one goal, one mission; to give everyone access to an opportunity. Now, when I think about pledging my head to clearer thinking a little deeper I think it is about having an open mindset. There are many ways to take the phrase "open mindset" but for me, I start thinking of experiences. I think about how when I did the engineering and design project, how open you had to be to failure, change, and your teammates ideas. An open mindset also makes me think about "help where you are needed", even if it isn't your specific job you just help. I have used clearer thinking in more ways than I thought I could.

The *"my heart to greater loyalty"* part confused me for a while when I looked at it. I kept thinking "How can I pledge my heart to the loyalty of 4-H?" But right now, I think that it isn't

pledging loyalty to 4-H, more so the people around me and the lessons they give. I think that a better way to comprehend this small, but impactful, section of the 4-H motto is lending your heart and help to the people around you which leads to amazing friendships and many new things learned. The things that I have gained from this part of the motto, are some of the most important ones. I have received knowledge and skills like how to deal with criticism, how I can be a good leader, and so many more things, but the biggest one that I am using right now is my speaking and communication skills. Without having these communication skills, I am not sure that I would be able to be standing here confidently telling you all this. I am able to have some leadership by helping with archery in our counties 4-H archery club and through our counties ambassador program as well. 4-H has enabled me the ability to be prepared for the workforce, along with the responsibility and skills it comes with. I have learned things like eye contact, posture, answering questions quickly and getting to the point all through judging during our county fair.

I think that "*I pledge my hands to larger service*" means working together to achieve a goal. Teamwork and helping others are such a big part of 4-H and everyday life. I have gained so many friendships and role models through 4-H, each with a different experience but usually we met through helping each other. I am positive that the people I have met through 4-H will help me whenever I need it, and I know I will help them too. Community service is also something that we do a lot in 4-H, many community service projects are done in events and meetings on both club and county levels. When I help in 4-H it comes in many different forms; I can be helping with tables and chairs for any event, helping others loading and unloading their projects, helping set up targets, simply opening doors, and this very moment where I am talking to all of you about 4-H. The friendships I have gained from 4-H alone are some of the best I have.

During the 4-H pledge, when we say "*I pledge my health to better living for my club, my community, my country, and my world.*" I first think of physical health, and that is true, 4-H does have the healthy club program which promotes healthy eating, activities, and quality family time. But I think that the health part goes a little deeper. I believe that it relates to having a healthy and good; mindset, mental health, and character. In 4-H, you grow your personality, the way you see everyday things, and you learn to look for the good in everything. No one's life is perfect, no one's road is a straight jog, more of a winding and bumpy trail full of ups and downs. In 4-H, I have grown my support group, people and mentors I can trust, they help me through every little pot hole in my trail which is helping me become the healthiest and happiest, best version of myself.

Since I am approaching the end of my speech, I just want to tell you 4-H is for anyone. 4-H has more things to offer than it doesn't, and it is never too late to start. If you have something you love to do, like baking for an example, you can bake things to show. Not only will you be baking, you will be growing. Growing your strengths, your knowledge, friendships, growing in things you didn't know was possible. 4-H has so many things to offer, so many things that if I wrote about them all, I'd be up here for an hour, writing about all the things I've done and all the things you can do. In order to do these things 4-H needs funding, so everyone can grow.

Now that I am done telling you about my experiences, the 4-H motto, and the ways 4-H has personally impacted me, and how it can impact you. I have a final question for you, can you help us all get access to an opportunity; support 4-H, Extension, and the youth of North Dakota by supporting this funding bill?

