

Good Afternoon Chairman Wanzek, and committee members. My name is Madalyn Meckle and I am a member of the Clover Power and Burleigh County Bowmasters 4-H clubs in Burleigh County. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the 4-H program through NDSU Extension.

4-H Speech

When I was asked to write a speech about my 4-H experiences, I was hesitant to fully commit. Not because of the task itself, but because of how busy my life has become with school, finals, and all the other things that seem to pop up unexpectedly. But I agreed to write the speech and testify because 4-H has always been an important, special and constant part of my life. It has shaped who I am and brought me to where I stand today, before you testifying on behalf of NDSU Extension.

When I sat down to write my speech on Sunday, I struggled to put my thoughts into words. I wasn't sure how to capture what 4-H truly means to me. The people around me suggested I write about my experiences or what I had learned, and my mom kept reminding me to mention that "I am a 4th generation 4-H'er," but none of that advice seemed to help. To me, 4-H is more than just a list of activities or milestones. It's something much greater.

So I closed my laptop after writing just one sentence: "Through 4-H, I am involved in many activities, activities that have taught me something," then I headed to archery practice.

Archery is a huge part of my life and my 4-H journey. Every Sunday, I help coach the Burleigh County Bowmasters, a club my mom leads. We set up at 4:30 p.m. and tear down around 8:00 p.m., making archery our Sunday ritual. I coach for two hours and then practice for the last hour. Archery, through the shooting sports program, has taught me valuable skills,

including patience, perseverance, and leadership. These skills are not only important on the range but also in everyday life. As I practiced, I realized that these lessons—patience, perseverance, and leadership—are what I wanted to highlight in my speech. 4-H is not just about activities, it's about the personal growth and skills that we develop along the way. The skills I have learned in 4-H and use in archery are just one clear example of how 4-H has shaped me.

I have been part of many activities through 4-H, including Leadership Awareness Weekend, helping at 4-H camp, and attending countless other events. I have also taken on several leadership roles, serving as President of the Burleigh County Ambassadors and as President of my 4-H club. I'm proud to be an avid 4-H'er and a part of the program that does so much for youth.

But 4-H isn't just about the activities available—it's also about what I am learning. Through 4-H, I've gained essential skills like communication, leadership, responsibility, and teamwork – life lessons that will stay with me forever. 4-H has taught me the importance of working together as a team, the value of helping others, and the power of perseverance when facing challenges. These experiences have given me the confidence to step up as a leader and the ability to adapt to any situation. The lessons I've learned in 4-H have shaped me into the person I am today, and I know that they will continue to guide me in everything I do in the future.

Overall, 4-H has much more to offer youth than what is seen on the outside and can “Make the Best Better,” just as the 4-H motto says. 4-H continues to help grow and shape youth into well-rounded individuals, equipping us with skills that extend far beyond the classroom or the club meeting. Through 4-H, we not only learn how to lead, communicate, and work together, but we also develop the confidence and resilience to face life's challenges head-on. The

experiences and lessons 4-H provides have played a significant role in shaping who I am today. It has prepared me for the future, given me the tools to make a positive impact in my community, and has shown me the importance of lifelong learning. I am certain of this, because without these important lessons I would not have the ability to explain why 4-H is so important to youth, and especially myself. I'm proud to be a 4-H'er, and I will carry the values of 4-H with me for the rest of my life, continuing to strive for excellence and to live out the 4-H motto. 4-H has not only given me the skills to lead and communicate but has shown me the importance of being a good person. As I move forward in life, I know that the values of 4-H will continue to guide me. I am forever grateful for this program and hope it continues to inspire and empower youth for generations to come.