

Growing with 4-H: September as a Season of Reflection and Renewal

September is a month of transition. The long, warm days of summer give way to crisp mornings and evenings, school buses resume their routes, and the first hints of autumn colors begin to appear in the trees. For many, September feels like both an ending and a beginning. In 4-H, this sense of change is particularly significant—it is a time to reflect on past accomplishments with pride and to look forward with excitement to what is yet to come.

Celebrating Summer Successes

For 4-H members, summer is typically the busiest season of the year. They spend countless hours caring for livestock, tending to gardens, practicing demonstrations, working on sewing projects, and preparing entries for the fair. County and state fairs serve not only as showcases of hard work but also as celebrations of dedication, perseverance, and growth.

As September arrives, many members take time to reflect on their summer experiences. They remember the early mornings in the barn, the nerves they felt before stepping into the show ring, the satisfaction of completing a project, and the joy of hearing their names called during the awards ceremony. These experiences teach valuable lessons that go beyond what ribbons can represent. They instill a sense of responsibility, time management skills, resilience, and pride in a job well done.

A Fresh Start for a New 4-H Year

September is not just a time for reflection; it's also a season of renewal. For many clubs, the start of September marks the approach of a new 4-H year. New members are welcomed, officers are elected, and goals are set for the upcoming months. This season represents fresh starts, allowing young people to choose new projects, explore different areas of interest, and challenge themselves to grow in exciting ways.

Just like the harvest season that September brings, 4-H teaches us that growth occurs when seeds are planted with care and nurtured with time and effort. The lessons learned in barns, gardens, kitchens, and meeting rooms extend well beyond 4-H. They help shape members into leaders, problem solvers, and responsible citizens in their schools and communities.

Looking Ahead: National 4-H Week

September brings excitement for **National 4-H Week**, which occurs in early October. Clubs start brainstorming ideas to showcase their projects, promote 4-H to new

audiences, and highlight the positive impact 4-H has on their communities. This is a time for members to share their pride, invite friends to join, and tell their personal stories about how 4-H has made a difference in their lives.

This preparation goes beyond mere publicity; it serves as a reminder of the vital importance of outreach and service. 4-H is not just about the individual benefits members receive, but also about the contributions they make to their communities. By getting ready for National 4-H Week, clubs reinforce the connections they share with their schools, neighborhoods, and counties.

September's Message: Making the Best Better

Ultimately, September reminds us of the pledge every 4-H member knows well: *"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."*

As we transition from one season to the next, our pledge takes on a deeper significance. It encourages us to use our talents and energy not only to improve ourselves but also to strengthen the world around us. September marks the start of fall and signifies the beginning of another year of growth, leadership, friendship, and service in 4-H.

As the leaves begin to change, let's welcome the opportunities that lie ahead. We should take the lessons we've learned from the summer fairgrounds and apply them in our classrooms, communities, and homes. Let's continue to embody the mission of 4-H: to make the best even better.

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