

My 4-H Story

Hi! My name is Chloe Blackburn. I am 13 years old, and I am in the 8th grade. I began my 4-H journey in April 2021 as a novice. My mom is the person who inspired me to join, she had some awesome stories from when she did 4-H! 4-H provided me a space and community to do some of my favorite things. Just a few of these things are, baking, jewelry making, hanging out with friends, photography, etc. 4-H helps me understand the learning process, and what it really means to make a difference. Being around 4-Hers is like being around people who really understand me, and alongside those people I know that I will accomplish great things. As I grow older, I am going to strive to be a leader in my community and build my self-confidence.

Along with my myriads of other 4-H projects, I really poured my dedication into three specific projects this 4-H year; baking, jewelry, and photography. Baking has always held a special place in my heart from the second I toddled in the kitchen as a little kid and breathed in the smell of my mom baking something for breakfast. This year I explored the art of baking breads. Step by step, I worked my way through the baking journey with a system of trial and error. And eventually I was met with the perfect result! I navigated through my jewelry and photography projects in a similar way. Jewelry is all about asking yourself how far your skills and imagination can take you, so trial and error is essential. After trying a billion different ways to attach bullet shells to chain I was met with an amazing result. Similarly, photography is all about capturing the best moments in the best way. So, after loads of attempts, you get to capture beautiful moments. In the end, all projects have one thing in common, you have to go through the process of trial and error to get the beautiful result you want.

This year I also focused on my leadership to help myself become a more positive and helpful peer. Now that I had been in 4-H for five years, I felt I might as well try to become a member of my 4-H county council. Although I tried for a position as secretary and reporter, in the end I landed a place as the song and rec leader of the Los Alamos 4-H County Council. Granted, song and rec leader is not a very high position in a 4-H council, but it's definitely the first step I needed to work myself up the ladder. As a member of the council, I was an important voice in decision making for my 4-H community.

I was also secretary for my 4-H club. Along with keeping track of meetings and writing the minutes, I guided and supported our club president in meetings. I also acted as a leader and question answerer for any of my club members. Their success was one of my highest priorities. I believe that if any of our club members are struggling, we all are, and so therefore it is everyone's responsibly to help each other succeed.

A very important part of being an active and positive community member is doing acts of service for your community. Our community supports us, so it is our duty to support them back. For example, the local rifle range is generous enough to allow the 4-H shooting sports clubs I am a part of to shoot there every week. So, to help the rifle range and to show our thanks, we host a Rifle Range Cleanup Day every October where we fix up targets, clean up trash, and more. Furthermore, the Pajarito Environmental Education Center (PEEC) is a fun free place to visit in Los Alamos, and every year they host Bear Fest to educate the community on bears and such. They invite organizations around the community to help, so this year my 4-H club set out to come and participate. We brought bunnies and chickens to safely educate the community on how to keep your livestock safe from wild animals. I realized how small friendly

conversations can help brighten someone else's day enough to empower them to make a difference of their own. So, with all this in my mindset, I can appreciate that these small deeds are what make me a positive and helpful community member, whose endeavors make all the difference.

Now we can look at the contest side of things! I like to look at contests as what you learned throughout the 4-H year, constructed into one big finale. I had a quite grand end finale to my 4-H year indeed! At county contests, I competed in the Horticulture, Wildlife ID, Prepared Speech, Entomology ID, and FCS Identification contests. I achieved first place in all competitions I participated in, except for Wildlife ID, where I placed second. These county contests are an annual reminder to myself and my peers that hard work pays off!

Now moving on to the county and state fairs, where I had the opportunity to enter my projects. At my local county fair, I had a grand total of 15 exhibits. These projects were valuable pieces of my success and growth throughout the 4-H year, so it was just beyond rewarding to see all the awards I had earned at the fair. Of my 15 exhibits, I had 8 that went to the New Mexico State Fair, and I ended up being awarded a first-place ribbon and a second-place ribbon. Even though that does not seem like much, it is still better than I have done in the past.

I also compete at county and district .22 Caliber Rifle competitions every year. This year I did not have as much success as I have had in the past, but I still managed to place third place at county contests and second place with my rifle team at districts. So, all in all, I had a very successful, memorable, and educational competitive 4-H year!

At the end of the day, this was yet another exiting and inspiring 4-H year, that brought me new opportunities to grow as a person and open my arms to new things. With the constant

support of my friends, family, and peers, I did not just set goals; I achieved them. 4-H has taught me what it feels like to be a leader; someone who truly makes a difference. In conclusion, I am so proud of what an amazing person I have become through 4-H, and I cannot wait to continue my journey to the stars of success next 4-H year!