

Pathways to Agriculture: Expanding Agriculture and Livestock Opportunities Chaffee County

Project Introduction

Within my internship, instead of focusing on one large research project or topic, I collaborated with others in the extension office to help with multiple smaller scale projects. I volunteered at Guidestone camps throughout the summer, brainstormed activities for and attended 4-H development camps and worked closely with 4-H families and the extension team to prepare for and assist in the Chaffee County Fair. My direct supervisor left on medical leave half-way through my internship, therefore I was tasked with many jobs to get ready for our county fair.

Internship Goals

1. Work with Guidestone to help kids in the community connect with agriculture through their summer camps and programs.
2. Create showmanship guides for the Chaffee County Fair's Round Robin to help 4-H youth show and present animals outside of their specific project.
3. Assist with day-to-day communication within the extension office and help 4-H families prepare for the Chaffee County Fair.

How Does This Apply to My Education?

I believe that this extension internship allowed me to develop and challenge my communication skills, explore different avenues for careers, and give back to a program (4-H) that nurtured a work ethic which I rely on heavily for my education. Although Biochemistry does not directly relate to this specific extension program, I was able to connect this internship to skills that will be useful in both my education and career, such as working with families, partnerships, and brainstorming programs that can help share information and ideas with community members.

What I Did...

Guidestone Camps:

Guidestone is a non-profit organization which sets out to develop the presence of agriculture in the community's youth. For three weeks of my ten-week internship, I volunteered at these camps. Each week a new group of kids, ages 5-11, participated in various activities that taught them to care for agriculture, the history of homesteading in the San Luis Valley, and basic gardening skills. I was able to teach these kids about the 4-H program and field their many questions. Many kids were interested in doing a livestock project for the fair and asked questions about how to care for the animals and what 4-H was. These camps were extremely fulfilling and meaningful.



Figures 1,2.
Kids at Guidestone camps, listening to stories, and feeding animals

Showmanship Guides:

The Round Robin is an annual event at fair that tests 4-H youth on their ability to not only show their own animal, but also other animal species. Each animal has unique showmanship rules; therefore, I created a guide for each animal in the Round Robin (Swine, Beef, Lamb, Goat, Horse, Chicken, and Rabbit). I included basic showmanship fundamentals, figures to help visually explain showmanship of each animal, and a list of questions that livestock judges can ask the showmen. These guides were available at fair for kids to study prior to the Round Robin.

What I Did... (cont.)

Prepared For and Aided in the Chaffee County Fair:

With Merielle, my main supervisor and 4-H Youth Development Agent, out on medical leave, I was given a variety of tasks to help 4-H families prepare for fair namely: grade knowledge exams taken by 4-H kids, create buyers invitations for the Junior Market Livestock Sale, field and answer questions from 4-H families, organize and deliver information to families prior to fair, and collect data during the weigh-in, both the indoor and livestock shows, and during the sale. Fair was the accumulation of the hard work from both the 4-H youth and our extension office.



Figures 3,4.
The Chaffee County Round Robin (left), and the market livestock weigh-in with swine, sheep, goats, and beef (right)

What Did I Learn?

Before this internship, I was unaware of what extension offices do for different communities. I learned about the role of extension and how important it is to brainstorm programs and camps/events that can benefit our youth in terms of agriculture and learning about the world around them. While in this position, I also developed and grew my communication skills both with our extension offices' partnerships and with 4-H families.

Next Steps

In the future, I hope the participants from the Chaffee County Fair will compete at the state fair, and those that did not place for state, still had an enjoyable time at the county level.