

4-H clubs enthusiastic about starting a new year

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Passing on skills that will benefit members for years to come, 4-H is back and planning in-person programming for members.

4-H Manitoba executive director Dawn Krinke said the organization is hoping to have a hands-on experience for members this year.

“Our members and leaders seem to be anxious to get going with in-person activities again,” Krinke said. “It is a social organization. People like to be together.”

The youth group was able to keep the clubs together for 2020-21 by shifting projects online, she said, but members and leaders missed meeting face to face.

While many members are excited to return to in-person programming, virtual options developed during the pandemic will remain available for members.

Krinke highlighted The Keystone Club, a special virtual club for members whose clubs would not run during public health measures. The Keystone Club allowed 4-H members to remain part of the organization and take part in virtual activities.

“We went from Cloverbud right through to adult, so we saw everyone,” Krinke said. “To see the change from when they first start to when they get to be an intermediate or a senior member ... There’s an incredible difference in that period of time. You just get more confident.”

She added some equine and beef clubs were able to host some in-person events over the summer.

4-H clubs in Westman offer a rich selection of different activities and projects to join, Krinke said. There are traditional agricultural-based projects, but the organization has expanded to include a diverse selection of programming for young people.

“We have all kinds of projects. We offer in the region 90 different projects and then we



Beef project 4-H members Kamryn Gilliland, 15, Dylan Frey, 13, and Casey Thompson, 15, relax after a steer competition at the 2019 Royal Manitoba Winter Fair. (File)

do the Pick-a-Topic, that gives people the ability for anyone to decide what kind of a project they want to do,” Krinke said.

“There is something for everyone.”

Projects in the Westman region include Lego, Photography, Food, Sewing, Welding, Rocketry, Geocaching and many more.

Brandon Explorers 4-H Club leader Kristen Phillips said youth have shown amazing resiliency during the pandemic, engaging 4-H in Zoom meetings, conference calls, and in-person cohort groups, when allowed.

The Brandon Explorers are different from others as the year begins in May and runs through to April with members between the ages of six and nine. The club is focused

on nature, the environment, gardening and agriculture.

“That May to September timeframe is really important for us to be able to get out and do a lot of the things ... by being in nature,” Phillips said.

Their last two meetings marked the first time they have been together as one big club, and it has been fantastic being able to be together in-person.

“The 4-H program is such a great program for building communication skills and leadership skills. It really helps kids come out of their bubble,” Phillips said.

“People think it’s just beef or just horse or you’re part of a multi-purpose club, but there is everything. There are so many different projects and you can actually make your project. Anything that you are

passionate about or excited about, there is a project out there for you.”

The Brandon Explorers are considered a multi-club but have been able to focus on nature, agriculture and outdoor living. Youth participate in hiking, canoeing and camping. They also tour farms, including worm farms to learn about composting and engage in many different ways of learning as a group.

“4-H is such a fantastic program and there are so many scholarship opportunities and leadership opportunities in the future. 4-H is recognized nationwide, and so the opportunities are endless if you get involved,” Phillips said.

Poplar Hill 4-H Club head leader Melissa Slashinsky said the club is hoping to be

in-person after facing a year completely online for club and project meetings.

“We haven’t been able to look at projects for the last couple of years, so it’s exciting to do a project and see the outcome of it [in-person],” Slashinsky said.

This year, the organization has a wide variety of projects available. She added leaders are willing to work with members to ensure they can find an activity they are passionate about.

“Anything you can envision we pretty much offer,” Slashinsky said. “There are three clubs right around Brandon that offer multi-projects.”

She added communication is a key aspect of 4-H, and the skills youth gain through public speaking help them succeed in the future. The public

speaking portion of 4-H helps give members skills they will use in jobs when they are older through the confidence they gain.

“It’s a great program for kids. It builds confidence and lets you try out new things every year,” Slashinsky said. “It’s a whole new world out there.”

Virtual programming will remain available this 4-H year, including the popular Food Series every Thursday night from Jan. 6 to March 10. A babysitting program will also be available online.

The 4-H year officially began on Sept. 1 and clubs are still welcoming new members. Contact 204-726-6136, check out 4-H social media or visit 4h.mb.ca/ to find a club.

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