

Adding Value to Our Lives

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What is your greatest fear?

Research indicates that Americans' top five fears, listed in order of 1 - 5, are the fear of public speaking, the fear of death, the fear of spiders, the fear of darkness, and the fear of heights.

Essentially, more Americans would rather die than give a public speech!

The annual district wide County Club Day event is on March 4. As a busy mom, I understand that as parents we have to make choices when it comes to what activities we allow on the docket and what has to slide. It is nearly impossible to participate in every activity that our kids have an opportunity to partake in. Choices must be made. When it comes to County Club Day, let me tell you why my family and I make this event a top priority.

Although there are many great youth development organizations available to participate in, research has proven that the development of communication skills is what sets 4-H apart. 4-H provides many opportunities to develop public speaking skills and interpersonal communication skills.

County Club Day is a great venue to practice those essential skills, whether the 4-Her is giving a project talk or demonstration or simply talking to the judge after a vocal or instrumental solo.

Tufts University has been conducting a 4-H longitudinal study that to date has revealed exciting data in regards to positive youth development.

The 2012 summary of findings identify that 4-Hers excel in school and the sciences. 4-Hers report "getting better grades, [report] higher levels of academic competence and an elevated level of engagement at school."

In addition, 4-Hers are "nearly two times more likely to plan to go to college and are more likely to pursue future courses or a career in science, engineering, or computer technology." Tufts University has also discovered that 4-Hers are less likely to become prematurely sexually active; less likely to use drugs, alcohol and cigarettes; and are more likely to exercise and be physically active.

I am constantly amazed and sometimes dazed by the time pressures that families feel today. But when it comes to developing communication skills, take time to participate in activities that hone the skills of public speaking and interpersonal communication. These skills will set our kids apart in the workforce as leaders on the job and within our communities.