

News Column for use the week of 1/13/2025
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River Valley Extension District
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The Importance of Mastering Communication Skills

Communication is extremely vital in our society. It allows us to build relationships, connect, develop our knowledge base, and help us make good decisions. Most people use four types of communication in their day-to-day lives, verbal, non-verbal, visual, and written. This includes sign language, letters, photographs, body gestures, and so many other ways we communicate with each other. Without communication skills living in our society would be nearly impossible.

Many of us can agree on why communication is so important. Then why is public speaking the number one fear of the average person? Common reasons why people are afraid to public speak are the fear of failing, forgetting the content, a judgmental audience, the unexpected, and time. The best way to prevent that uncomfortable and anxious feeling is to prepare and practice.

As adults, we try to prepare our youth with life skills that will help them in society. The best thing you can do is allow your child to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as skits, plays, and giving speeches. Introducing public speaking to youth at a young age has many benefits. It reinforces self-confidence and promotes personal development. A young adult who has mastered public speaking skills will show career advancement, professionalism, critical thinking skills, and leadership abilities. All these life skills are very valuable to an employer.

In 4-H, we empower youth will skills to lead for a lifetime with communication at the forefront. River Valley's largest district-wide event helps 4-H'ers practice mastering just that, communication. On February 15, 2025, Clay, Cloud, Republic, and Washington counties will come together to compete in 13 different events. With over 400 entries this year, youth will participate in activities such as model meetings, public speaking, demonstrations, dance, skits, and much more. District Club Day is a great opportunity for youth to showcase their talents and abilities while learning parliamentary procedures and mastering communication skills.

River Valley started the AIR (Application, Interview, Resume) Contest at District Club Day. This contest is unique to the district but offers a great opportunity to the older youth in the organization. The AIR contest is a mock contest, designed to expose youth 16 to 18 years old to the application and interview process and potential careers available in the River Valley District. In 2024, ten youth submitted their resume and applications to one of four local businesses. On February 15th, youth will have the opportunity to interview in front of a panel of judges made up of representatives from the local businesses. This opportunity allows our youth to gain real-world experience before graduating high school.

River Valley 4-H has a lot to offer and is open to any youth aged 5 to 18. For more information about River Valley 4-H, please contact Macy Hynek at 785-527-5084 or email her at mhynek@ksu.edu.