



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Contact: Aaron Baker
(573) 751-1507

National 4-H Week Recognizes Commitment and Achievement

Growing up in Saline County, I'll never forget the experiences I had as a member of the Napton 4-H Club. Serving as a club president makes any job look easy today. As I go to county fairs each summer around the district, I realize now the commitment each parent, volunteer and child puts into this worthwhile experience.

Sunday, Oct. 2, marks the beginning of National 4-H Week.

For more than 100 years, 4-H programs have helped young people learn leadership, citizenship and life skills. Rather than focus on youth problems, 4-H programs help young people meet key developmental needs.

Last year 4-H programs reached 105,463 Missouri youths ages 5 to 18. About one-quarter of these were enrolled in clubs. Others participated through school programs, seminars, conferences, camps or child-care programs. Even more impressive are the 10,994 adults and youths serving as volunteers to make this all possible.

Traditional livestock programs continue to be the base for this organization, which is now growing to meet the needs of a more urban society. In 4-H, young people can participate in virtually anything they want—from mapping with GPS systems to clowning at local nursing homes. This program, facilitated by our land-grant universities, is making a difference in the lives of thousands of young people.

Missouri 4-H's Operation Military Kids, which is led by a remarkable woman, Joan Zeller, and youths in our district, is leading the way in assisting military families that have parents serving away from home.

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4-H provides leadership opportunities for young people by allowing them to be leaders today. Last year, nearly 1,500 people visited the MU campus for educational events including State 4-H Congress, State 4-H Teen Conference, and 4-H contests that provided opportunities for young people to test their knowledge and demonstrate their skills

Funding for 4-H on the state level is through the budget for higher education for the University of Missouri. With our state spending so much money on crime prevention and the continual deterioration of the family unit, I can't think of a better use of state money.

One of my staff members was a state 4-H President. He always insists that the most important part of the program is staying involved in the teenage years. Scholarships, trips and other worthwhile events make it worth the effort. If you know a young person not already enrolled in 4-H, now is the time to let them know about this program. If you know a local 4-H member or volunteer, congratulate them on their commitment during this 4-H week. They are truly making a difference in our local communities.

If you or anyone you know are interested in joining 4-H, please contact your local University of Missouri Extension office or contact my office and we will help you make the connections. It will be a commitment that will reap rewards for a lifetime.

If you have questions or comments about this issue or any other issue please call toll free 866-768-3987 or by email at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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