



March 18, 2016

Clover Connection

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What does it mean to be green? I've been involved in the 4-H program in some way or another for the better part of my life. From being a member when I was young and then volunteering and working for the program when I got out of college. I came across this article recently and found it partly true and entertaining and wanted to share it with everyone.

“9 reasons Why Being in 4-H Makes you a better person – your head, heart, hands and health for a better future.” by A.E. Krupp <http://www.retale.com/blog/reasons-4-h-makes-better-person/>

If the smell of pigs brings gut-wrenching nostalgia; if cross-stitching a lighthouse deep into the night gets your gears going; if you feel upset when two cookies from the same batch look dissimilar—you might be a born-and-raised 4-H member.

1. You learned to lose with grace and dignity.

You were a hardworking eight-year-old, slaving long nights baking imperfect muffins—and some fifty-year-old judge gave you a participation ribbon. Yes, 4-H judges can be heartless. But you learned, as you ate your sad and lumpy muffins alone with your participation ribbon in hand, to lose with grace and to understand that you can't always be the best (not in the 4-H field and not in the real world).

2. You learned to be a role model.

As you aged-up in the old 4-H club, younger children joined—turning their attention to your abilities and, most of all, noting that you conducted yourself with strength and courage. Now, in your adulthood, people give you the respect and the television remote control that you deserve.

3. You learned how to meet a deadline.

You could wrangle eight projects, quilt deep into the night whilst watching *Little House on the Prairie*, meet all your 4-H deadlines, and still maintain your social connections with the little kids across town who owned the best pool.

4. You learned how to cook. Read: no college ramen for you.

You stood on a rickety chair to reach the stove and stirred, sizzled, and spiced your way to 4-H cooking honors. Early-on, you knew how to take care of yourself, to fill yourself with proper nutrition—outside of the realms of pop tarts and fruit roll-ups. Which means you're not an adult with a full reliance on fast food.

5. You learned that practice makes perfect.

No matter the 4-H skill, you had to perform that sucker a ton of times—doing the same task over and over throughout the humid summer until—miracle-of-miracles—you perfected the chocolate chip cookie. If you were lucky, next year you could move up to cupcakes.

6. You learned that doing things correctly takes time and effort.

During “bad years,” you stayed up until four in the morning on the day of the judging, perfecting your stitching, putting the finishing touches on your quilt (usually with your mom right there, nagging you whilst simultaneously giving you chocolate and telling you you’re just great, honey). But during good years, you spent months on those projects, never taking a single stitch for granted. Time and effort yielded the results you wanted and deserved.

7. You learned organization.

Children aren’t that organized, but mad 4-H’ers had to be if they wanted blue-ribbon bragging rights. And so: to the barn you trudged to organize some hay bales, you lined your sewing strings up by color, and you remembered everything. Like some sort of alien elementary student, you never missed an assignment. And now: Your type-A-level organization skills are through-the-roof, helping you win at life every day.

8. You learned the circle of life and where your food really comes from.

If you showed livestock, you knew early on: Those pigs weren’t coming home. And thus, you appreciated where your meat came from, that treating animals well was an important element of food production, and that getting the smell out of your clothes wasn’t even worth the attempt.

9. You learned not to be afraid of trying new things.

Woodworking? Cake decorating? Just bringing your cat to the fair? You could try anything as a 4-H kid—which was freeing, allowing you to figure out what you actually liked. And now in your adult years, you’re unafraid of that big move across the country, your next career step, or just trying Zumba for the first time.

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