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And as we all know, it is the Season to be Merry and Bright! And here in Mecosta County, we have a lot to be joyful for. We have just ended our first program year together and our 2015 program year is in full swing. I don't know about you, but I have enjoyed all of the experiences that we have gone through together and cannot wait to see what the next year holds in store for us. I know that this is a busy time of year for our families, so make sure you enjoy and spend time with the ones you love! There are a TON of events that are coming up in 2015, so please check out the calendar inside. I am hoping that we can continue to grow and nurture our relationship with every passing day!

Again, enjoy the holiday season and the gift of your family. From my family to yours, have a very blessed, safe and happy holiday season. Merry Christmas!

Sincerely,

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Sincerely,
Resolve to try something new!

4-H members, parents and leaders across the state are making resolutions and starting new projects. As you consider your goals for the next year, challenge yourself to try something new to expand your horizons or consider a new aspect of a project that you already enjoy.

Michigan 4-H Youth Development
Has a lot of great statewide events held around the state including:
- 4-H Exploration Days
- 4-H Great Lakes and Natural Resources Camp
- Kettunen Center Workshops and State Shows.

Challenge yourself to explore a new project or activity with your club and have fun while you learn together.

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Statewide 4-H Workshops and Events

January 2-4: Michigan Sheep Breeders Convention
Lansing

January 17-18: 4-H Youth Leadership & Global Citizenship Spectacular
Kettunen Center

January 30-31: Green & White Youth Event Open Hog Show
MSU Pavilion, East Lansing

January 31: State 4-H Rabbit & Cavy Show
MSU Pavilion, East Lansing

January 31 – February 1: 4-H Winterfest
Kettunen Center

February 6-7: 4-H Horse Judging Workshop & Mini Contest
MSU Pavilion, East Lansing

February 27-28: 4-H Veterinary Science Teen & Adult Leaders Workshop
Kettunen Center, Tustin

February 28-March 1: 4-H Beef Sheep & Swine Teen & Adult Leaders Workshop
Kettunen Center, Tustin

For the most up-to-date events listing, go to http://4h.msue.msu.edu/events
4-H Capitol Experience: Preparing for Active Citizenship

4-H Capitol Experience is an annual four-day conference that focuses on civic engagement and public policy. Up to 100 teens from around the state meet in Lansing, Michigan to:

- Experience state government in action.
- Explore different aspects of a policy issue that may affect individuals and their communities.
- Understand a citizen’s responsibilities and learn how they can influence policy issues.
- Interact with legislators, state agency staff, lobbyists and other resource people, and learn how policy is made, including attending a bill-writing session.
- Explore various careers in public policy

Quick Facts:
Who should attend? High-school students at least 14 years old and adult participant-chaperones. Space is limited to 100 teen and adult chaperone-participants.

When? From Sunday, March 22, 2015 (3 pm) to Wednesday, March 25, 2015 (12:30 pm)

Where? Tours and agency visits will take place at the State Capitol and surrounding area.

How? Each teen or adult participant-chaperone will need to apply online. Participants who attended in previous years will be considered based on space available. Additional registration forms (Parent Permission Form and Media and Medical Release) will be due in February 2015. Contact your county MSU Extension office for more details and keep checking the 4-H Capitol Experience web site see when the registration site will open.

Cost? (including all meals, lodging and material fees) $310 4-H members, $320 non-4-H members. Scholarships for up to half the participant cost ($155) will be available. To qualify, a completed application must be sent to the State office as outlined on the scholarship application.

More Information
There are many ways to learn more about 4-H Capitol Experience. For example, check out:

- The 4-H Capitol Experience Facebook page
- This video [http://bit.ly/1qpsl2x](http://bit.ly/1qpsl2x)
Senior Scholarship Available: The 4-H Council Scholarship is available for all graduating seniors. The application is due by March 1, 2015 - late applications will not be accepted! The application is available on the MSU Extension page, as well as from your leader. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the office.

Graduation Cords and Tassels Available: All seniors are welcome to contact the office to order graduation cords and tassels. Seniors will receive their items for their school's Honor Night. If you are a senior who has NOT contacted Amy with your graduation information, PLEASE DO SO IMMEDIATELY! I am working on a "Senior Special" and would like to know when your Honor's Night is so that myself or another 4-H Council member can attend.

United Way Baked Good Auction Sale: Rebecca Herzog, one of our 2014-2015 4-H Ambassadors, represented Mecosta County 4-H along with Amy on November 26th for the United Way Cake Auction! This was a live bidding event on the air of Big Country, which was a lot of fun! Thanks to Julia Doughty and her family, Julia was able to ask one of her friends to donate a beautiful buttercream pecan 4-H Clover Cake that went for $125 thanks to Lake Michigan CPA's generous donation. Big thanks to all who helped orchestrate that!

Match Day 2014: Thanks to some pretty special Council members, our 4-H program brought in over $1,000 from donations from community members at this years Match Day that took place at the Big Rapids Holiday Inn!

Huge thank you to Tammy and Telyse Belka, Don Zimmer, our 4-H Ambassadors Zane Carey and Rebecca Herzog, Ramona and Evelyn Okkema, and Trudy and Jadyn Herzog for representing our 4-H booth so well! It was a great event that allowed the youth and adults to share all of their 4-H experiences and why the 4-H Program is so important with visitors to who visited our booth.

Because of the $1,100 that was raised at the Silent Auction in October, those proceeds were put towards our Match Day event. We will know the total donated amount of proceeds after the first of the year.

EXCELLENT job, everyone!
Cookbook and Apron Design Fundraiser:
Tammy Belka, 4-H Council Vice President, is now accepting recipes for the 4-H Council's cookbook fundraiser. If you would like to contribute your favorite recipe that have been passed down through family generations, OR if you have a killer recipe that everyone loves at cookouts, then please send her an email at: bammomtmy@gmail.com.

They are accepting any recipes, from appetizers to main dishes, casseroles, and everything in between! Please send the recipes along with your name. **The recipe submissions are due to Tammy no later than March 1st so they can be ready for print for Mother's Day.**

Also, if you or someone you know possess great artistic skills, then pass along the word about our 4-H Council Apron Design Contest! The ideal design should encompass a very cool 4-H event, feeling or picture of what 4-H means to you. **All submissions are due to the office by March 1st.** YOUR design could be featured on hundreds of aprons!

**NEW 19 Year Old Project:** I am indebted to the youth 4-H Council members for their suggestions, modifications and ultimately their tough love and approval on the new 19 year old project. It is called "My Last Boot Print" and is specifically targeted at our 19 year old members. The goal of the project is to allow members who have reached the age limit of 19 years old to showcase THEIR journey through 4-H and allow others to "walk mile in their boots".

Members will have the opportunity to tell their story through any form of communication that they choose, including but not limited to a poster board, website/Facebook creation, professional portfolio, scrapbook, or power point. Full details can be found online or with leaders in your club or by contacting Amy at mill1898@anr.msu.edu or by phone at (231)-592-0795.

There are also some cool things to keep in mind, specifically, that 19 year old members will create their own concrete boot print to be displayed at the exhibit building. There will also be a trophy/monetary prize available through sponsorships. Remember, if you or someone you know will be participating in the fair as a 19 year old member, then they should be contacting Amy soon!
Important News!

2015 Enrollment Information: As we all know, much blood, sweat and tears have come from the transition from 4-H ACCESS to 4-H Online…just kidding, but it certainly feels that way! Although it has been challenging for leaders, members, and families, there is a light at the end of the tunnel and I REALLY appreciate all of your patience. January 12, 2015 is when the official 4-HOnline system is set to launch.

As soon as I gain access to the new system and have been trained on it, I will offer workshops to the leaders on how to use the system in their clubs. The enrollment deadline has been extended until January 5th, 2015. Please fill out your enrollment paperwork and turn in your paperwork along with the $10 participation fee to the office. Please keep in mind that it is $10/child or $30/family with families more than 3. Please make all checks out to MSU. If you have any questions, please email Amy at mill1898@anr.msu.edu. Thank you again for your patience with this transition process!!!

4-H Day at the Breslin: Join other 4-H youth, 4-H volunteers, 4-H families, and MSU Extension staff members and their families at the tenth 4-H Day at the Breslin.

This annual celebration of Michigan 4-H Youth Development will be held January 18, 2015 when the Spartan women's basketball team plays the University of Iowa Lady Hawkeyes at the Breslin Student Events Center. Gate D will open for 4-H and MSU Extension guests at 12:30 pm, while the game will begin at 2 pm. Tickets are free to 4-H youth and their families, 4-H volunteers, and MSU Extension staff and their families. Contact your county 4-H office to obtain your tickets. Just let your 4-H leader or your county Extension office know you (and how many of your family members) want to attend. Transportation may be coordinated through your county Extension office. Contact them for details. Parking is free for school buses; all other buses are $20, while the cost for cars is $5. For more information, contact your county MSU Extension office.

4-H Summer Camp: Is scheduled for Monday, August 10 through Wednesday, August 12, 2015 for youth ages 8 to 12 years old. There are day camping options available as well as overnight camping for those who would like to participate! The next camp meeting for counselors will be FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, 2015 here at the Mecosta County Services Building from 1:30-3:30pm! Please call the office if you are unable to attend.

Looking for a fun community service opportunity for your next club meeting? Check out The Pillow Case Challenge!

Yes, something as “simple” as sewing a pillowcase makes a difference.

Be one of 1 MILLION to take part in the PILLOWCASE CHALLENGE!

Pillowcases are donated to:
◆ Hospitalized kids
◆ Homeless families
◆ Veteran’s homes
◆ Foster children and teens
◆ Other community charities

Wouldn’t it be great to be able to claim that 200 pillowcases were made by MICHIGAN 4-H members? And that they were donated to local charities! We already have 27 made by Michigan 4-Hers during a session at 4-H Exploration Days in June 2014. Here is the website:

4-H State Awards:
Are you a 4-H member 13 years or older? Do you have at least 3 years of experience in a project area? Why not consider applying for a 2015 4-H State Award!

To apply, you will prepare a portfolio of your 4-H experiences, including experiences in your primary project area, as well as other project areas, community service, leadership and 4-H promotional experiences. Once your 4-H portfolio is completed, you will compete in the Regional Competition where the 2015 State Award delegates from the Central Region will be selected. Following the Regional Competition, delegates will advance on the State Awards Celebration held in June at Michigan State University during Exploration Days.

For more information, please contact Amy at the office or by sending her an email at mill1898@anr.msu.edu. The deadline to submit your portfolio is February 1st. Not sure where to begin? There will be a County State Awards meeting on December 22nd at 1:30pm at the Mecosta County Services Building. All 4-H youth planning on participating in State Awards, or the Mark of Excellence Essay Contest should plan on attending.

4-H Mark of Excellence:
4-H members who are 11 and 12 years old are invited to enter the 2015 4-H Mark of Excellence essay contest. The essay theme is “Because of 4-H, I can…”. If you would like more information on the contest, please contact Amy at the office for more information. Two essays will be selected to represent Mecosta County during the awards ceremony in June at Michigan State University. County winners are invited to attend Exploration Days and are recognized on stage during the State Awards Celebration. Essays are due to the Extension Office by Friday, January 30th. If you are interested, please attend the State Award Workshop Meeting on December 22nd!!

4-H Excellence in Agriculture Award Winner!
Three phenomenal 4-H leaders were honored with the 4-H Excellence in Agriculture award at a Dec. 3 awards banquet at Michigan Farm Bureau's (MFB) 95th State Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids.

The award was established to recognize volunteers who exhibit excellence creating positive learning environments, participate in the learning process, understand and appreciate society's diversity and become active citizens through service and leadership.

Trudy Herzog of Paris, Erika Humm of Breckenridge and Nell Ward of Dowagiac will each receive a $1,000 grant for volunteer training, supplies or curricula to enhance 4-H programming locally and statewide.

CONGRATULATIONS, TRUDY!

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Poultry News:
Poultry kids please take note that this year you will be able to pick out your own birds from your own hatchery or source! This will put us more in line with the rest of the market projects. Please keep in mind these target dates for your projects:
- Turkeys: Around March 16th
- Geese/Ducks: Around April 15th
- Broilers: By May 18th.

If you have any questions please contact Jennifer Sylvester or Mary Katke.

Educational Spring Clinic:
Mark your calendar to attend the first educational spring clinic on SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH, 2015 at the Morley Stanwood High School Auditorium beginning at 8:30am. We will have guest speaker Neil Kentner in attendance and will be going over poultry education, along with other small and large animal education. Please keep your eyes open for a flyer and updated agenda, coming soon! To register, please call the office—this event is also open to the public, so tell your friends!

Youth PQA Class Offered:
YOUTH PQA will be offered Monday, January 12, 2015 at 7pm at Evart Middle School Auditorium. If you plan on attending, please RSVP to Jake Stieg, Osceola County 4-H Program Coordinator. He can be reached at (231)-832-6139. Please note that this PQA cannot be used as an Educational Credit if you are already certified. If you are not sure of your PQA status, please call 1-800-456-7675. If you cannot make it to the January event, another Youth PQA workshop will be offered in April.

Beef Weigh In Recap:
HUGE THANK YOU to our beef superintendents, Steve Doughty and Bill Worden, along with Overall Superintendent, Doug Richard, for their help tagging our 2015 beef steers! Also a special shout out to Julia Doughty, for being so fearless and diving in to help wherever she could. We had 46 animals tagged in just over 3 hours, so nice work everyone! I appreciated all of the help and am looking forward to a successful beef market project from our 4-H kids!

Bylaws Update:
At the last JLA meeting, the new bylaws were presented to those club members were present and the changes were reviewed by each superintendent who made changes. The official voting on the new bylaws will take place at the January 19th meeting. Thank you for your patience and understanding.