



Michigan 4-H Youth Mentoring

4-H READING BUDDIES: BAILEY AND OREN

Located in Michigan's upper peninsula, in the state's second least populous county of Luce, is the small town of Newberry. With only 6,502 people in the entire county and a poverty rate that is 14.6 percent higher than the statewide average, the Michigan 4-H staff who support Michigan State University Extension's mentoring programs have had to get creative to provide youth in their community with quality mentoring experiences.

Through this creativity, the 4-H Reading Buddies Afterschool Program was born. During the school year, older students mentor younger students directly after school. Each match meets weekly for nearly two hours and spends their time participating in activities designed to cultivate relationships and build new skills. During the last 20-30 minutes of their time together, the mentoring matches spend time doing paired reading activities to improve reading skills.



THE MATCH

In November 2015, 4-H Reading Buddies matched sixth grader Bailey with kindergartner Oren. Bailey decided to mentor a kindergartner to share her love of learning and to learn something new herself.

"My first time meeting Oren, he was very shy and didn't talk much, if at all," said Bailey. "Now every time he sees me, he gives me a big smile and tells me all about his day and how much fun he had. He is very funny, he is sweet and kind and listens very well."

Over the past seven months, Bailey and Oren have established a strong relationship. They have worked together on crafts and science experiments, played games, cooked together and celebrated holidays. In addition, Bailey has helped Oren develop a love for reading.

"Oren really looks up to Bailey and loves to read because of their time together," said John, Oren's father. "She has made the program so special for him."

ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS ABOUT BAILEY & OREN'S MATCH

- Oren and Bailey's bond is so strong, it has expanded beyond the mentoring program. Oren's parents have taken him to see Bailey's softball games and she has attended Oren's sporting events.
- Oren thinks of Bailey before holidays and makes her gifts.
- Teachers at the school note that the program and these mentoring relationships have had a positive impact on the youth, including Oren.
- Oren's half-brother, Riley, is also matched in the 4-H Reading Buddies Program.



“I’ve always wanted to help little kids and doing it educationally makes me feel proud of myself. I love seeing the smile on Oren’s face while we are reading.”

- Bailey



“It was obvious from the beginning that this was going to be a strong match. Oren’s eyes light up when he sees Bailey.”

- Jennifer Lasslet, Luce County 4-H Mentoring



ABOUT MICHIGAN 4-H YOUTH MENTORING

All young people need a caring adult in their life that can provide guidance, lend a listening ear and support their goals and aspirations. While many youth find these individuals on their own, not all are so lucky. To help fill the void for those without a nurturing adult in their lives, MSU Extension offers formal youth mentoring programs in 10 Michigan counties.

Through these programs, and the time committed by nearly 85 caring mentors, 270 Michigan youth were matched with an encouraging adult who served as a personal coach, cheerleader and friend in their everyday life. As a result of these MSU Extension mentoring programs and positive adult relationships:

- 97 percent of surveyed mentees felt they had a mentor that cared about them and 90 percent said their mentor made them feel special.
- 79 percent of surveyed mentees felt their mentor helped them make better decisions and 60 percent were doing better in school, thanks to their mentor’s help.