

Story Title	Leaving All Comfort Zones to Become a Leader
Program	Franklin - 4-H Youth Development
Educators	Pat Banker
Is this related to an Equal Program/Employment Opportunity?	Yes
Executive Summary	4-H Youth Development department of Cornell Cooperative Extension Franklin County strives to help teens expand their horizons by offering life skill opportunities in leadership, work force readiness and personal growth.
Issues/Needs and Audiences	<p>Leadership requires practice, but young people get few opportunities to do so. Some youth have innate attributes that help them lead, such as extroversion, creativity and problem solving. These however, are only a small part of the equation. Much more important are a set of skills that can be learned and practiced. These include listening skills, oral communication, collaborative skills, empathy and posture.</p> <p>A recent study done by “Psychology Today” indicates that of the roughly 100 skills surveyed, employers ranked leadership in the top 10 most desirable traits. Second only to written communication, leadership skills are deficit among recent college graduates. Specifically, 28% of graduates are described as “deficient” with only a small fraction deemed highly skilled.</p> <p>Living in a remote, economically stressed area of northern New York, many young people do not have the financial means or the opportunity to experience cultures outside of their own. Providing youth with an opportunity to experience cultural diversity strengthens personal competencies.</p>
Extension Responses	Cornell Cooperative Extension Franklin not only encourages local 4-Hers to attend leadership retreats, state-wide events, and trips to NYC, Cornell University, Albany and the State Capitol Building, and Washington D.C., fund raisers and sponsors are sought to defray the cost. Our educators believe offering opportunities for adolescents to learn life-skills will help them become effective leaders. By including youth in all facets of program deliverables including program development, program implementation, and evaluation we are able to mentor tomorrow’s leaders while tailoring programming to specific needs.
Accomplishments and Impacts	A reluctant young man joined the Franklin County 4H program as a junior in high school after he liked what he saw while watching the 4H Fair Horse Show. He said he had no intentions of doing the “other 4H stuff” because he didn’t enjoy being in groups, he chose to be a follower and became very uncomfortable in large crowds. His only goal in joining

4H was to be able to show his horse at the fair.

He learned about the State Teen Action Representative Retreat (STARR) event and began to inquire. With some coaxing, he reluctantly registered. He shared that he had never been more than 2 hours from his hometown and was not sure he could handle being in a big group of strangers in a city the size of Syracuse. On the trip to STARR his anxiety level grew. He shared many times that he didn't think he could be in this program. Immediately upon arrival he was taken on a walking tour of the fairgrounds to ease his anxiety.

By day two this young man had not only become comfortable with the 300 plus teens from diverse backgrounds, but was asking how he could become more involved for the next year. His confidence level continued to grow. To date, he has applied and was selected to the 2016 STARR planning committee. This once terrified, reluctant STARR participant is now going to be instrumental in planning all activities, seeking presenters, and will be involved in all aspects of running a very large program. He went from being a terrified and reluctant participant to working to become an effective leader.

STARR became the spring board for this young man who has since attended Career Explorations, served as a State Fair Junior Superintendent, attended the Wonders of Washington trip, and helped with many county-wide community service events.

For this future community leader, he found an organization that supported his growth, helped him gain leadership abilities and changed his mantra from "I don't believe I can participate" to "I know I can be a leader and make a difference".

Collaborators Cornell University, STARR Planning Committee, Franklin County 4-H Volunteers

Special funding sources (if any) Franklin County Leader Association, Franklin County Teen Leadership Funds