

My 4-H Story 2015-2016

By Aiyana Austin - San Juan County Senior 4-H Member

My name is Aiyana Austin and this is my ninth year as a 4-H member. I am 15 years old and a senior in the Roadrunners 4-H Club of San Juan County. This year I served as our Club Secretary and on our club's Craft Fair Committee. The projects I enrolled in this past year were New Mexico State 4-H Horse, Rabbit Self-Determined, Poultry Self-Determined, Quilting, Pastries and Pies, Breads, Leathercraft Unit II, Knitting II, and Boiling Water Bath Canning.

This year was my first year as a senior 4-H'er. As a senior, more responsibility is expected of me. I should be a positive role model for others, be able to learn at a higher level, pass on skills to younger 4-H members and set a good example. If younger members see you making an effort to do better through your involvement and dedication, they are more likely to follow in your footsteps.

Also as a senior, more opportunities are open to me. I was able to attend the Senior Leadership Retreat, New Mexico 4-H State Conference, and serve as a CIT at 4-H Youth Get Away. Participating in these events enabled me to meet new friends, learn higher level skills, and put my leadership skills to use. Important skills I learned through participating at these events had to do with improving ourselves as an individual. At Senior Leadership Retreat, we learned to apply our basic leadership skills and instill them in younger members. We did this by engaging in a variety of leadership based activities and workshops. At the New Mexico State 4-H Conference, we talked about certain values we have within ourselves and how we can influence others using these values. By competing in senior-level contests and listening to the messages of public speakers, we learned to leave a better imprint in our world today. State Conference was my favorite 4-H event this year. I felt it was the event that really "spoke" to me personally. Serving as a CIT at 4-H Youth Get-Away, was a great learning experience for me. It gave me confidence as a leader and it was fun too! I learned how to be compassionate and understanding, especially when there are kids that feel left out or unwanted in a group. My CIT experience brought me out of my shell and into the great world of leadership!

As a senior, I also served as our Club Secretary and on our club's Craft Fair Committee. Being the Club Secretary takes dedication and attention to record keeping such as member attendance, taking minutes, attending every meeting, and completing the Club Secretary's Book by the required due date. For me, being Club Secretary was no easy task, especially when procrastination kicks in! I was so relieved and proud to complete the 53 page Club's Secretary's Book on time! For the Craft Fair Committee, I was assigned to be in charge of the advertising and promotion. I designated myself and others to distribute flyers, place ads in local newspapers, contact radio stations, promote the craft fair online, and through other sources.

This past year I have improved in each of my projects. In all projects, I have learned the detailed process of record keeping, which is immense with nine projects! I also learned new skills that are useful to me every day and in my future. These skills have helped me to become more independent, organized, and confident. Most importantly, I learned the responsibility to take the initiative to complete my 4-H projects on my own.

My favorite project this year was the New Mexico State 4-H Horse Project. In this project, I learned the valuable lesson that consistent practice makes all the difference. I worked hard to improve my riding skills and keep my horse in top condition. I felt a great sense of accomplishment when I received the "Rookie Rider Award" and my mare received the "Reserve Grand Champion" at the San Juan County Fair. I knew the true meaning behind these awards; my efforts and dedication in working with my horse throughout the year paid off. Next year, I hope to advance my riding skills to a higher level.

My 4-H Quilting Project was the project that gave me the most struggle and stress. I completed the Rail Fence Throw, Rail Fence Pillow, and the Quick and Easy Pillowcase. I wanted a special theme for my project items so I decided on a western theme using six different fabrics. All of these fabrics were very unique and I was proud of my choice until one horrible mistake was realized. In the beginning, I had failed to purchase enough fabric to complete my throw! My fabric choices were not common fabric designs. It was impossible to find the exact match because time had passed since my initial purchase. After multiple days and hours of searching the internet and stores everywhere, I was unable to find an exact match to one of the six fabrics

in my theme. Because of this, I had to piece together two blocks using leftover cutoff pieces from other blocks with barely enough to do so. For my pillow, I had to use a totally different fabric so my throw and pillow did not match exactly. Thankfully, I was able to complete my three items in this project despite all the fabric misery. To my astonishment, all three items received 1st places at the San Juan County Fair, and went on to receive two 1st places and a 2nd place at the New Mexico State Fair! One very important lesson I learned in this project, because quilting can be costly and require a big time commitment, is be prepared before you start! Make sure you have the adequate fabric/supplies at the beginning and that you can dedicate the time necessary to complete the items before spending a lot of money!

Overall, I would say that this 4-H year has been a blast! I am proud to say that I will be finishing out this year with many awards, new skills, accomplishments, lessons learned, completed 4-H Member Record Book, and Club Secretary's Book to my credit. Success, accomplishment, trying to make a difference in the world around me does not come easy. It takes a strong desire, dedication, and perseverance. Most importantly, if you are willing to learn, try to be better with each year, and help others along the way, then you are a successful 4-H'er. The 4-H program teaches members not to be quitters when they make mistakes, but to instead, learn from those mistakes, apply it to their lives for the better, and move forward. This is what the 4-H program has taught me throughout the years. I can make "the best better" by being a leader who leads and inspires others to stay on the right path. My hope is to be able to look back at my 4-H years and see perhaps I did inspire another or that I made a positive difference in my community as a result of what I have learned through my 4-H experience.