



JANUARY 2026

4-H Family News

GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY



A NEW YEAR

The new year is a time to enjoy a blank canvas, a fresh start, and for setting greater goals. For 2026 Grand Traverse County 4-H hopes to lean into a joyful year of helping youth become Beyond Ready for all the adventures life has for them.

For 2026, one very attainable goal is another strong collaboration between 4-H and the Northwestern Michigan Fair. Youth in Grand Traverse County 4-H experience incredible opportunities while preparing for the week of fair. This has already begun for so many who have joined their club, chosen their animal and are learning every day about the importance of caring for a project while watching it grow. We are off to a fantastic start with a signed contract in hand. The fair board has also given 4-H encouragement for bringing non-animal exhibits back for judging and auction. By asking other fairs to share how they run their non-animal exhibits, we are excited to bring this back to the Tanner Building and the 2026 week of fair.

A second goal is for another record-breaking fair auction. 2025 saw great gains thanks to the hard work of our 4-H youth, their leaders and families as well as community wide support with our exceptionally generous buyers. Youth in 4-H learn the importance of building strong relationships within their community, advocating for themselves and showing good sportsmanship. The week was hot, but the youth and their animals persevered. With fair being a week later this year, August 9th – 15th, we hope to enjoy even great gains and meet our goal of surpassing \$1.5 million in auction sales. If 2025's record breaking auction was \$1,389,280.60, this goal is attainable.

In addition, we hope to introduce Grand Traverse County youth to all the development opportunities 4-H has to offer. With support from our AmeriCorps member, Crystal Woodward-Turner, who begins February 18th, we will be reaching out to new populations of youth. She will share 4-H activities focused on healthy living. We also hope to lower barriers for youth to attend life changing statewide events such as Exploration Days and 4-H Winterfest.

There is so much positivity to look back on in 2025, and we have positioned ourselves to meet brave goals for 2026. Youth in 4-H have exceptional opportunities to build healthy relationships and gain knowledge for their future endeavors while providing service to our community in the process.

Thank you for all you do to promote 4-H in Grand Traverse County,

Sarah Bye

IMPORTANT DATES

DATE CHANGE: Livestock Council Meeting January 12th

Leader Association Meeting January 20th

Livestock Council Board Meeting January 27th

Swine Registration due February 2nd, 2026

Education Expo March 1st

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COUNTY 4-H NEWS

NEW 4-H HEALTHCORPS MEMBER: CRYSTAL WOODWARD-TURNER



Please give a warm welcome to Crystal Woodward-Turner! Starting in February, she will be the first 4-H HealthCorps member in Grand Traverse County!

4-H HealthCorps members lead fun and helpful classes for kids and teens about mental health, emotional health, and substance use prevention. They teach skills like handling stress, building strong friendships, boundaries, and bouncing back from tough times. These lessons help young people grow into confident, healthy adults. Members serve in MSU Extension offices across Michigan, bringing programs to local communities. While serving, members build job skills, learn from real-world experiences, and grow their professional networks. They work closely with families and community leaders, making a real difference in the lives of youth and helping improve overall community health. Members also learn about public health, gain leadership experience, and explore careers in education, health, and community service. It's a great way to give back while building a strong foundation for the future.

MICHIGAN 4-H LICENSE PLATE

Looking to upgrade your license plate or purchase a gift for the 4-H'er in your life? The Michigan 4-H License Plate is still available! Similar to other special cause fundraising license plates in the state, the Michigan 4-H license plate will cost \$35, with \$25 of the purchase fee benefiting Michigan 4-H Youth Development. A \$10 fee will also be charged to benefit Michigan 4-H when the plate is renewed. License plates may be ordered by visiting <https://www.michigan.gov/sos>, by mailing in a form or scheduling a visit to any Secretary of State office. The plate will be delivered by mail in two to three weeks. Visit <http://canr.msu.edu/news/michigan-4-h-license-plate-now-available-to-drivers> for more details!



DONATING TO GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY 4-H



There are many ways to support your local 4-H community, including donations. If you're interested in helping Grand Traverse County 4-H, please visit <https://mi4hfdn.org/giving-to-4-h/> to explore the different ways to provide a donation. Clubs can also feel free to share this link with family and friends to increase visibility. When donating, be sure to select or type in **Grand Traverse County** in the form, otherwise your donation may be distributed statewide (which is great if that's what you'd like!)

Together, we can help build a Ready Generation!

Thank you for your generosity!



COUNTY 4-H NEWS

THE 4-H SPRING LIVESTOCK WORKSHOP



Save the Date!

The 4-H Spring Livestock Workshop will return again in 2026 on Saturday, March 7th! More info to come in the new year. Hope to see you there!

The workshop is designed for 4-H youth and volunteers in beef, sheep, goats, and swine project areas. Youth will learn about different aspects of their livestock projects throughout a variety of breakout sessions. Session topics include intro to your species project, animal evaluation, marketing your livestock project, reproduction, nutrition, and more!

2026 STATE 4-H RABBIT & CAVY EXPO AND SHOW

Reminder: The 2026 State 4-H Rabbit & Cavy Expo and Show is just around the corner!!! 🐰🐹

📍 Register by January 14 for Showmanship! <https://events.anr.msu.edu/event.cfm...>

Youth participants can:

- ✓ Exhibit their rabbit and/or cavy
- ✓ Compete in exciting contests:
 - Showmanship (Pre-registration required by January 14, 2026)
 - Breed Identification
 - Photography
 - Skillathon
 - Educational Displays
 - NEW this year: Rabbit Hopping!

📅 Date: Saturday, January 24, 2026

📍 Location: Farm Bureau Livestock Pavilion at Michigan State University



STATEWIDE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

4-H Thriving Model of Positive Youth Development



Relationships are the foundation of a successful 4-H program! These relationships include building friendships with other members and leaders, building great working relationships and trust between program leaders and members, and adult leaders working together to organize great opportunities for youth.

We hope you can find others in the 4-H program in which you can build positive friendships and/or mentorships. Join us for any events and meetings to get to know everyone in the program.

Youth thriving is the first step in building youth who are #BeyondReady! Contact your local 4-H staff for more information.

January 13: Wild Spartans

Online

This month's session is "Nature's Detectives: How Insects Help Solve Crimes Against People, Animals and the Environment through Forensic Entomology." Tiny creatures can tell BIG stories about the world around us: explore creepy-crawly clues and learn how science and nature work together to solve puzzles. Ask questions through a live Q&A. This free virtual series is for youth ages 12-19.

www.canr.msu.edu/events/4-h-wild-spartans-january

January 13: Avoiding Money Mishaps

Online

In today's digital world, young people are increasingly targeted by fraudsters, scammers and predatory lenders. This interactive webinar will empower youth with the knowledge and tools to protect themselves and their personal information.

www.canr.msu.edu/events/avoiding-money-mishaps-jan13

January 21: Adulting 101 – Fraud Fighters: How to Stay Scam-Free

Online

From fake jobs offers to phishing texts, scammers are everywhere. This workshop breaks down the latest tricks and shows you how to guard your info, your credit, and your peace of mind.

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/events/adulting-101-2026>

January 24: 2026 State 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Show and Expo

Farm Bureau Pavilion, Lansing

4-H'ers exhibit rabbit and cavy projects and participate in educational knowledge contests: showmanship, skillathon, breed identification and rabbit hopping. **Register by January 14.**

www.canr.msu.edu/events/2026-state-4-h-rabbit-and-cavy-show-and-expo

January 26: Michigan 4-H Volunteer Webinar Series: Beyond Ready Basics

Every great 4-H experience has a few powerful ingredients—and volunteers play the biggest role in making them happen. Explore the four vital elements that help youth thrive: discovering sparks, feeling a sense of belonging, building developmental relationships, and staying meaningfully engaged.

www.canr.msu.edu/events/michigan-4-h-volunteer-webinar-beyond-ready-basics-bringing-the-vital-elements-to-life-in-your-4-h-club

February 7: 4-H Winterfest

Eagle Village Retreat Center, Hersey

4-H Winterfest is a hand-on learning camp for youth ages 8-12. Youth pick workshops and participate in team building activities. Come and have fun this winter! **Register by January 23.**

www.canr.msu.edu/events/2026-winterfest





STATEWIDE 4-H NEWS

Capitol Experience

COMING
SOONMARCH 15-17TH, 2026Cost \$365
Scholarships may be available
through your local 4-H office!

Register for Michigan 4-H Capitol Experience!

At Michigan 4-H Capitol Experience, teens learn how to change the world for the better through engagement in Michigan's state government and public policy process. The program is scheduled for March 15-17, in Lansing.

The three-day event, open to high-school-aged youth, includes tours of the Michigan Capitol, interactions with state legislators, meetings with state agency staff, lobbyists and state-level experts and learning how policy is made. During the program, youth work in small teams to draft legislation on: agriculture; civil rights and youth advocacy; crime and law enforcement; education and teacher retention; environment and natural resources; health; and jobs, the economy and infrastructure.

The cost to attend is \$365, which includes lodging at the Okemos Conference Center. Please contact your local 4-H program coordinator to inquire about local funding opportunities. To learn more and/or find the link to register, visit www.canr.msu.edu/4_h_capitol_experience/.

Earn prizes with the Michigan 4-H Cash Composition Contest

Did you know youth are being targeted by scams too? That's this year's theme for the 2026 Michigan 4-H Cash Composition Contest! Michigan youth aged 9-19 are invited to participate through writing an essay on this year's question.

Top entries receive a \$100 gift card, thanks to contest sponsor, Extra Credit Union. MSU Extension will host two webinars to help with fraud awareness and essay writing. Essays are due by March 1. For contest details and essay submission information, visit: www.canr.msu.edu/4-h-money-smarts/money-smart-kids-contest.

Extra Credit UNION

2026 Michigan 4-H Cash Composition Contest

Write a brief 300 word essay addressing fraud and scams, and have the chance to earn a \$100 gift card!

Essays Due: March 1st, 2026
Winners Announced: April 1st, 2026

See website for contest details and requirements!

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

Apply for the Michigan 4-H State Awards!

Michigan 4-H true leaders ages 10 and older have an opportunity to be recognized for the great work they do in 4-H and develop their career skills by completing a state award application. A Michigan 4-H State Award is the highest honor bestowed on a Michigan 4-H member and provides an opportunity to receive recognition for their engagement in rich learning experiences that result in outstanding knowledge and life-skill development.

State award applications are divided into four categories: Mark of Excellence contest (10-11 years), junior state award (12-15 years), senior state award (16-19 years) and group awards (13-19 years). An Achievement Award was added last year for 18-19-year-olds. Each application and selection process varies, dependent on the applicant's age.

More information about the Michigan 4-H State Award process and Mark of Excellence Contest can be found online at bit.ly/stateaward. Applications are due April 1. For more information, contact your 4-H program coordinator or email Betty Jo Krosnicki at nashbett@msu.edu or Janice Zerbe at rajzerj@msu.edu.

Setting goals to make your best better

[Emily Hoover<hooverem@msu.edu>](mailto:hooverem@msu.edu), [Michigan State University Extension](#) - December 19, 2024

Updated from an original article written by Makena Schultz.

Learn the importance of setting goals and five key aspects of beneficial goals.

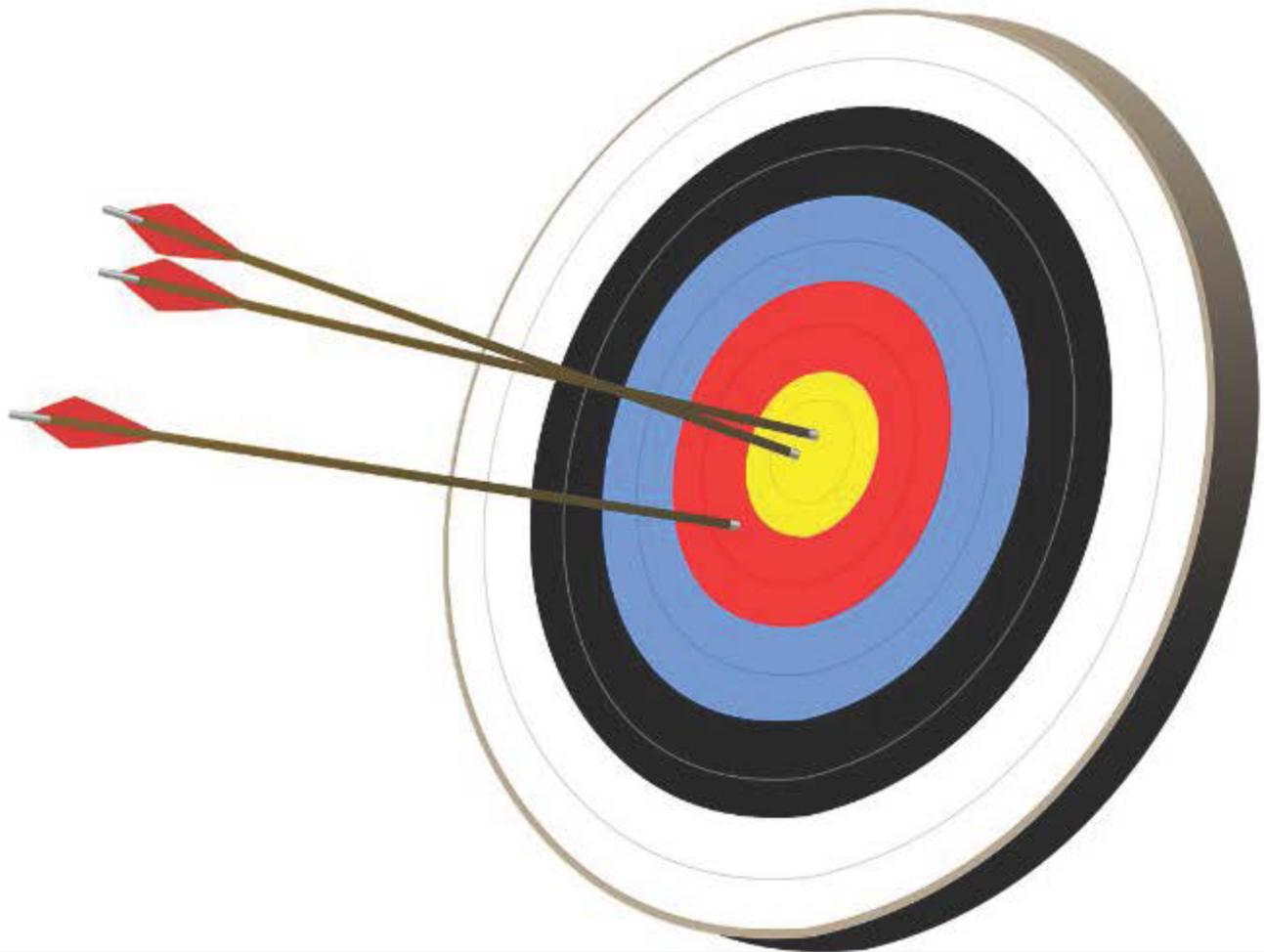
4-H encourages you to know yourself, identify your strengths and weaknesses, and make efforts to be the best version of yourself; to make your best better. These characteristics make up the foundations of setting goals. A goal is a specific outcome or achievement that an individual or group seeks to accomplish through effort and planning. Practicing intentional goal-setting helps you craft a clear, overarching picture of your ideal future, much like creating a vision statement for your life.

Goal-setting is one of the life skills youth can cultivate by participating in [4-H](#). One benefit of setting goals is that you acknowledge specifically where you want to be and what you want to accomplish. Goals complement your work toward a long-term vision for yourself while providing short-term motivation. Framing your goals in a way that has measurable outcomes to determine success is best. An example of a goal would be, "I would like to improve my grade in Algebra this semester."

When you set a measurable goal, it is helpful to determine whether it is a short-term or long-term goal. If you've set a long-term goal, often taking six months or longer to achieve, you can set mini-goals based on some of the phases or things you need to accomplish on the path of your long-term goal. Breaking up goals with smaller, easier to attain goals provides a sense of success and encouragement and can help you stay committed to the long-term goal. Forward progress of your achievements will raise your self-confidence and can create forward momentum.

Setting goals also allows you to identify needs, resources and skills you need to successfully reach your goal. Often, the resources end up being people. You don't have to work alone to achieve your goals. When you ask others for help, you build relationships, learn new things, and sometimes finish the process even quicker!

GOAL SETTING



You can create goals in a variety of areas of your life. Think about school, college, careers, family, attitude, hobbies, health, activities you enjoy, and public service. Would you like to achieve anything in these areas? We all have dreams and places we hope to be someday. Goals help us create a plan for achieving our dreams. One tool to help you set goals is the SMART method:

1. **Specific:** Set detailed goals.
2. **Measurable:** Set goals with objectives you can quantify to monitor your success.
3. **Agreed to:** Important if your goals impact or involve other people.
4. **Realistic and Relevant:** Think about your strengths and skills and set mini-goals to help you get to bigger ones.

5. **Timely:** Put a timeline on achieving your goals so you know when to measure your success.

These tips and tools are as relevant to youth as they are to adults. If you have young people in your life, use these tips to help them make **SMART** goals. Guiding youth through the goal-setting process while they're young gives them good practice and skills to continue making long-term goals in the future. For more examples of 4-H goal-setting, read "[Five tips for building youth's leadership skills – Part 4: Setting Goals](#)" by [Michigan State University Extension](#).

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