



Is competition good or bad?

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Fair season seems to create discussion around that point each year. We hear about good sportsmanship, character, winning and losing. Competition is on the minds of children and adults whether it be at ball games, soccer games, swimming or at county fair.

Involvement in competition takes understanding and reinforcement from leaders and parents. Being a good participant and competitor is very important to every child. As adults, it is necessary to give youth the support and recognition needed for what they have done. It is not if you win or lose but how you play the game that is important.

Janet Fox, 4-H youth development specialist, shares the following character traits of good competitors. They are honest, straightforward, show integrity and do their own work. They don't understate or overstate their abilities, accomplishments and skills. Graceful acceptance of results is another characteristic of good competitors. They are pleasant and nice toward other participants, spectators, program officials, judges, parents and others. They accept judges suggestions and results with a positive attitude.

Being involved in 4-H creates many competitive situations. 4-H members compete in the show ring, during contests and with exhibits. Although that is important, lifetime skills are being learned. Youth develop many leadership and presentation skills.

Showing good character is important for all youth and adults. Adults, whether it be parents, 4-H leaders, 4-H staff and others must set a good example and be good role models for youth.

As we prepare for the county fair, the pillars of character can be helpful in making competition educational. Trustworthiness is being honest, reliable and building a good reputation. Respect is treating others with respect, being tolerant of differences, considerate of others feelings. It is important to remember respect when dealing with ribbons received. Whether the ribbon is purple, blue, red or white, something has been learned. Develop responsibility by completing projects on time, doing the


best you can, using self-control and self discipline. Responsibility helps one persevere—keep on trying. The 4-H motto is "To Make the Best Better". Instilling the sense of responsibility in youth and setting a good example as adults will help accomplish the goal this motto has for all. The pillar of fairness includes playing by the rules, meeting deadlines, taking turns, sharing and not blaming others. Caring is another aspect of character that can be helpful during competition. Caring is being kind, expressing gratitude, helping others in need, being compassionate and showing you care. Giving support to fellow 4-H members and sharing the happy and sad times with them shows caring. Citizenship is doing what is necessary to make your club, school and community better. It is being cooperative, staying informed, obeying rules and laws, respecting authority and protecting the environment and surroundings. Volunteering is a big part of citizenship. County fair gives youth and adults the opportunity to share their skills with others through volunteering. Youth and adults can serve as fair superintendents and assistants. They can help at the Rock Café and Snack Shack. Serving as tour guides for Fair Fun Day gives older 4-H members the opportunity to show what they have learned through 4-H and what is available for younger youth.

As we get ready for the county fair, take time to reflect on the learning and opportunities that are available. It is a time to meet friends, share skills, enjoy watching youth and adults exhibit their skills in showmanship, judging, styling and demonstrations. County fair time is also a time for "Old Fashioned Family Fun". Bring the family, celebrate the accomplishments of a years work for many youth and adults. Remember also, that no matter the results, congratulate those who did well. Recognize and try to learn from the accomplishments and admirable traits of others. A competitive event should be viewed as a learning experience, regardless of the ribbon received. Exhibitors can grow as a result of the event by recognizing both positive & negative qualities.!

Summer time is a time for fun. Let's look at competition as a way to build character and make the best even better. See you at the fair.

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