

January 28, 2013

My name is Deb Dillner and I am the secretary for the Jackson County Fairboard. I am here today to offer my support for the Jackson County Fairboard on behalf of the bill HB 2048.

4-H is the largest youth organization in the United States with over 7 million participants. 4-H is best identified by its green four-leaf clover with an H on each leaf. The four H's on the emblem stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. 4-H is the only youth organization based at land-grant universities and the first experience many youth have with higher education.

4-H gives families a way to grow together. Families who plan, share, and work together develop a sense of unity — a feeling of being a productive team. When you are a 4-H family team, you have opportunities to recognize and expand the strengths, talents and skills of each family member, which contributes to increased feelings of self-worth. Self-esteem is crucial to the healthy development of young people, as well as to the healthy functioning of families. You will find a place to develop these skills and feelings in 4-H.

4-H is life skills. Through real-life situations, 4-H helps youth develop life skills such as: communication, citizenship, decision-making, leadership, interpersonal relations and community and global awareness. Youth learn these practical skills through hundreds of projects like cooking, wildlife, livestock, nutrition, sewing, archery and shooting sports, ceramics, electricity, computers, science, and many more. Preparing young people to become responsible, capable and involved leaders and citizens of Kansas and the nation is the main goal of the 4-H program.

Meadowlark Extension District is composed of Jackson, Nemaha and Jefferson Counties. Within the district, we have a total of 819 4-Hers, 2,000 volunteers and 32 4-H clubs. Jackson County alone has 277 4-H members, 700 volunteers and 11 4-H clubs. We currently have the largest 4-H Program in the State of Kansas.

Holton sits in the middle of the Meadowlark Extension District. As a central point, it has become a hub of District 4-H activities, and could become more so in the future. Having a place large enough and modern enough to conduct District-wide activities is becoming increasingly important. Current facilities are aging, inefficient and suffering from deferred maintenance. Having a new, equipped, modern facility will not only allow us to conduct programming locally, but would appeal to the region as a whole.

The Jackson County Fairboard is a huge part of the Jackson County 4-H Program. The fairboard is in charge of the Annual Jackson County Fair in which all of your 4-H'ers get a time to shine and show off all of the hard work and dedication from the past year. 4-H members typically exhibit their 4-H project work at county fairs, their displays ranging from quilts to sheep to photography. A fair is a fun way to gain experience and promote 4-H.

Our local 4-H program has expanded over the years and with that we have outgrown our current fairgrounds facilities. We have a great liability issue with the current grounds being located at a busy intersection within the town city limits. Our youth are always crossing the street to go to the local Dairy Queen for a cool treat or walking across 75 hwy to grab a quick bite at Burger King. This in my eyes is not a safe environment for our youth.

Our livestock has outgrown the current barns as well and we have to pile livestock on top of each other during the hottest month of the year. It is very difficult to fit 150 plus hogs or 80 plus fat steers into one barn when it is 110 degrees. We have been very fortunate in the past to have not had one escape and make a mad dash for downtown Holton or onto hwy 75.

Another facility that we have also outgrown is our current show ring. We have to run anywhere from 3-6 heats of the same breed in order to get everyone a turn to show their animal. In turn, this makes for an extra long show. There is also a huge safety issue when you cram 10-12 1,200 lb steers along with 10-12 4-H'ers into this show ring at a single time. The tiniest thing could spook one of the steers and then it ends up hurting the 4-H'ers along with itself.

4-H is a growing program and with it we are in need of a better location and facilities for our future citizens of the state of Kansas. Without the help of the Jackson County fairboard, we would not be able to give our youth this great opportunity to "learn by doing" through hands-on activities and community involvement which empowers 4-H'ers to develop and strengthen life skills. I appreciate the opportunities provided to the youth through partnerships. These opportunities can come in many forms, but to have a physical structure allowing expanded youth events, activities and opportunities is very important, as well as greatly needed.

Sincerely,

Deb Dillner
Jackson County Fairboard Secretary