

My name is Sarah Knolla and I'm a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in the state of Kansas. I've been involved in the Sedgwick County 4-H Shooting Sports program for more than 12 years. I was a shooting competitor for 7 years, ending my career placing 1<sup>st</sup> at Nationals in Grand Island, Nebraska. After aging out of the program at 18, I've remained involved in the program by coaching and volunteering at safety classes, practices and matches hosted by the Sedgwick County program.

The 4-H Shooting Sports Program is disciplined and organized, advanced, leading young people to state and national level opportunities, and a safe, enjoyable sport for people young and old. When I started the program in 2002, the first item we covered was gun safety. It was required then, and remains today, that all participants (accompanied by an adult) must attend a day long gun safety and basics class. In all of my time participating in the 4-H Shooting Sports Program, safety has always been priority number one. The program is teaching young learners the importance of gun handling safety both in the program and in life. In my personal opinion, I have seen 10 year old boys and girls demonstrating more knowledge of safety and discipline with rifles and pistols than adult men and women shooting for sport.

Being involved in the shooting program at a young age taught me many important life skills that molded me into the adult I am today. As a young shooter, I learned skills such as patience, commitment, motivation, communication with peers and adults and how to advocate for myself. I took initiative to get involved at the state level on the State Shooting Sports Committee as a youth representative. There, I was advocating for positive change in the state program from a youths perspective. During my time on the state committee, I learned even more about communication and formal procedures on a committee. I also went through a 3 day long coaches training course to be certified through the 4-H Shooting Sports Program as a Jr. Instructor. Since aging out of the program, I am no longer a Jr. Instructor but remain an adult certified instructor, able to lead safety courses and coach shooters in the program. Currently, the Shooting Sports Program still requires adult coaches/instructors to attend the 3 day long coaches training to be certified, through the 4-H Shooting Sports Program, to help run the Shooting Sports Program. This is another way that the program insures safety in all areas.

Above all of the important life skills that I have learned during my involvement with the 4-H Shooting Sports program, the best experience has been having pride in my successes and making memories while having fun with friends and family. Along with many other youth, Shooting Sports was my "sport". I was not an athlete involved in team sports in school, such as, basketball, volleyball, football, etc. I am one of few people who can say that they have placed 1<sup>st</sup> in Nationals in their "sport". I have made friends with people all over the country and I have also been so fortunate to know shooters that are now at the Olympic level of competition because of 4-H Shooting Sports. Being involved in shooting clubs and organizations is my passion and hobby and something I still participate in for fun. The joy, discipline and skill for shooting that I learned through the 4-H program have carried with me and I still participate weekly in shooting leagues with my father.

The skills that I learned through 4-H Shooting Sports have helped me as an adult in life and in my job. Through the program, I have also learned the importance of giving back to the community and will continue to share my passion and experiences with other young shooters.