

Alexis Luedtke's Address at the 2017 Governor's Blue Ribbon Meat Products Auction

Good evening and welcome to the 2017 Governor's Blue Ribbon Meat Products Auction.

My name is Alexis Luedtke and I am a 9 year member of the Dodge county 4-H program, and am currently serving as the Wisconsin 4-H Leadership Council Youth president. I would like to begin by thanking you, the donors, for supporting Wisconsin's 4-H program. It is impossible for me to put a value on the impact that 4-H has made on my life. I would like to extend a personal thank you to Governor Scott Walker, Secretary of Agriculture, Ben Brancel, UW-System President, Ray Cross, Chancellor Cathy Sandeen, Dean Karl Martin, the Fairest of the Fair, and Alice in Dairyland for being here tonight and for your continued support of Wisconsin 4-H.

I'm sure most of you are aware of 4-H's strong presence at county and state fairs, but 4-H is more than just the fair. It provides year long support for members in many different capacities. One of my favorite parts of 4-H when I was younger was attending my county's 4-H camp. I'll admit, it was pretty scary for me to go the first year, because it was the first time where I would spend the night away from home without any of my family there, I didn't really know anyone, and I was only in 3rd grade. I remember meeting my counselor, Kaitlyn, and reluctantly getting on the bus. At that time, little did I know the fun that was in store for me. Throughout those 3 days, I would meet some amazing people, learn new skills like how to shoot archery, and have the opportunity to learn some crazy new camp songs. I still remember the tears running down my cheeks as I returned back home, as I did not want camp to end. This adventure to Upham woods was one of my first experiences to be independent as I learned how to care for myself without my parents holding my hand

4-H is teaching individuals independence all over the nation. In Wisconsin alone, there are more than 31,000 youth members enrolled in the 4-H. That's 31,000 young people learning how to be confident in themselves and their own abilities. That's 31,000 youth mastering skills in project areas ranging from agriculture to photography to STEM, Science Technology Engineering and Math, or even to archery like I learned at camp. That's 31,000 youth belonging to over 1,350 community clubs in all 72 counties, and tribal nations.

Of those 31,000 members, almost 6,000 of them are enrolled as youth leaders. In addition, more than 15,000 adults are 4-H volunteer leaders. It has been proven that 4-H members and leaders are 2 times more likely to be civically active, and give back to their communities. As I think back to my camp experience, without the generosity of both the youth and adult leaders, there would not have been a camp.

The same could be said of all of you who are here today. Without your generous support and contributions, Wisconsin 4-H would not be nearly as strong and impactful as it is. So thank you, for all that you do for Wisconsin 4-H. You truly are making an impact on the next generation of leaders.