

Can anybody guess what is Americans' #1 fear?

According to the Washington Post, Americans fear public speaking more than anything else. Hi. My name is Oliva and I have been a 4-H member since 2011 and I am here to tell you how the 4-H public speaking program helped me conquer this common fear and how you can help other young people overcome it as well.

Let's start with a little bit of 4-H history. Raise your hand if you have ever heard of 4-H. When most people think of 4-H, they think of animals, agriculture and country kids and that *IS* where it started. Back in the 1890s researchers discovered that farmers were reluctant to use the new agricultural practices that were being developed at the universities. They found that young people were way more open to modern ideas and technology. Sort of like how kids embrace digital technology today. So, it was through rural youth programs that new agricultural techniques were introduced into farming communities.

While most people still associate 4-H with agriculture, it's not just about cows and corn anymore. 4-H has become the nation's largest youth organization with nearly 6 million members. It provides programs in rural, urban and suburban communities in all 50 states, and, program-wide offers projects in over 150 subjects. 4-H also promotes a very robust STEM initiative that includes projects such as rocketry, robotics, environmental protection, computer science and many more.

In addition to helping kids learn by doing, leadership development is a primary objective of the 4-H organization. With the belief that great leaders need great communication skills, 4-H sponsors an amazing public speaking program. Each year there are three adjudicated public speaking opportunities at the county, multi-county and state levels. There are 10 presentation formats to choose from. They include Demonstration, Illustrated talk, Science and Engineering, Educational Display, Informative Prepared Speech, Persuasive Prepared Speech, Impromptu, Interpretive Reading, Share-the-fun Skits and Cultural Arts. Members deliver a prepared speech to a panel of 2 or 3 evaluators who score the presentation based on an established checklist of required elements. Scores are then averaged and a white, red, blue or gold seal is awarded. Those who achieve a gold seal advance to the next level. At the state level, the platinum seal is the highest award. It's an amazing program that has helped me completely overcome my fear of public speaking. So much so, I am sure it will be an important part of my college and career path.

All of this information brings me to the reason why I am here today. This is my 4<sup>th</sup> year participating in presentation day. Each year, I've noticed it's a problem to get enough qualified evaluators to volunteer. Since Rotary is an organization of problem-solvers and that one of your stated objectives is to support education, I thought that partnering Rotary with 4-H is the perfect solution for solving our evaluator challenge. County Presentation Day is Saturday February 3<sup>rd</sup> and we need 15-20 judges. Online training is available and a short training session is also given the morning of so you can familiarize yourself with the program. The event lasts about 5 hours.

Are there any questions?

If there are no further questions for me, I have one final question for you. Will you please volunteer your time to help other kids just like me develop a skill that could change their entire future? I hope you will consider it. Thank you.