

For many years, I have surrounded my office with inspirational thoughts and quotes. These help to remind me of my focus, my direction, and my goals. Quite a few have been on my desk prior to my work as a 4-H agent but I find them to be even more applicable as I work with positive youth development!

One of my favorites is “The chief cause of failure and unhappiness is trading what you want most for what you want now.” This quote from Zig Ziglar applies to much of the teaching that happens with 4-H. No one just shows up at the fair with a perfect angel food cake or woodworking project! Many hours of research, learning, and practice go into that entry for the fair and potential for a blue or purple ribbon. In the same manner, the skills that young 4-H members learn in parliamentary procedure or public presentations don’t happen overnight but continued practice and stretching their goals result in youth who are accomplished presenters when they move to the next stage in their life.

Another of my favorites is an anonymous quote titled “The Secret to Happiness”. It states, “Forget. Apologize. Admit errors. Avoid mistakes. Listen to advice. Keep your temper. Shoulder the blame. Make the best of things. Maintain high standards. Think first and act accordingly. Put the needs of others before your own. Forgive.”

I appreciate how all of the others are tucked between Forget and Forgive. Many of these are attributes that we want 4-H members to develop and that all of us can be better at. When we apologize, admit errors, avoid making the same mistakes, and listen to advice we humbly acknowledge our learning process. Keeping our temper and shouldering our share of the blame certainly make for calmer discussion and smoother resolution. The 4-H motto is “to make the best better” and making the best of a situation is certainly a life skill that takes practice and resilience. Maintaining high standards is a very personal characteristic and we should be setting examples everyday for those around us. In 4-H we work on critical thinking and decision-making skills which means thinking first and acting accordingly. Community service, both as a club member and individually, is practiced daily in 4-H and this ties directly into putting the needs of others before our own.

These quotes have different meanings for me than they did eight or nine years ago but inspire me just as much today! Who inspires you? Who can you inspire?

Michelle Beran is the 4-H Youth Development Agent in the Cottonwood Extension District. For more information on this article or other 4-H Youth Development resources, email Michelle at mberan@ksu.edu or call 620-793-1910.

Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability.