Mentoring, the theme for this issue, is an important experience for teens… to give as well as to receive! A “mentee” gains practical advice, encouragement and support. They increase their skills and confidence and become more empowered to make decisions. Mentors develop leadership and communication skills. Personal skills are reinforced, confidence increases, and a sense of fulfillment develops. Wow… sounds like many of the Key Elements of Ohio 4-H Positive Youth Development! (Ask your 4-H staff more about these.)

Ohio 4-H Teen Connections is pleased to share these mentoring stories, insights and opportunities. Catch us at www.ohio4h.org/teenconnections/ or on Facebook at Ohio4HTeenConnections

Stay tuned for our next issue on Citizenship!

Thank you to the Ohio 4-H Foundation for its support of the Ohio 4-H Teen Connections.

By Heather Wilson
Fairfield County

When I was eight years old and in my first year of 4-H, I belonged to a 4-H club that specialized in the dog projects. There were not many older members in my club and I didn't really have any kids to “look up to,” however, I did have a great advisor who helped to teach me how to train my dog. As I matured into my third year of 4-H, I began helping younger members in the club with dog projects.

Little did I realize that I was transforming into a mentor for the younger members of the club. As the years passed, I began taking on larger leadership roles, such as camp counselor or junior fair board, and my peers and younger members looked to me for guidance.

It wasn't until I was aging out of the 4-H program at age 18, that I realized the tremendous impact I had on younger members when I shared my knowledge of 4-H projects with them. Parents of many of my fellow club members told me one-on-one that their child adored me and mimicked my every move. It was heartwarming to know that by simply sharing what I had learned or been taught was being passed on and would be passed on again to an even younger generation.

Whether you realize it or not, you are a role model to someone. 4-H members have such an incredible opportunity to be educated and share their knowledge with others. I encourage you, no matter what your age, to embrace being a positive role model and begin to mentor others by simply sharing something that you’re passionate about. It doesn't have to be a giant, ongoing project; just a few tips here and there and showing others that you care about helping them to achieve success.
4-H’er starts internship program

By Heather Wilson
Fairfield County

After doing an internship (student teaching) in a sixth grade classroom during my junior year of high school, I loved learning about potential careers that I wanted to do and gaining hands-on experience. I also interned with the American Red Cross communications department in Columbus during my senior year of high school. After these internships, I was convinced internships were an incredibly valuable experience for every student to have. So I came up with the idea, why not develop a 4-H program aimed to assist students with locating internships? I then wrote and received a grant from the Ohio 4-H Foundation to establish the program.

The Ohio 4-H Student Internship Program is designed to assist students, ages 16 and older, in career preparation and exploration. Students choose a career field of their interest and shadow a mentor with whom they are connected. It can be as few as or as many hours as the intern and mentor wish. It provides a great opportunity to learn more about the industry, gain hands on experience, and develop professionally.

The program is funded by the Sauder 4-H Career Development Endowment Fund. There is no cost for the intern to join the program. Interns will be given a notebook to keep a journal of their internship experience.

Recently, an hour and a half hands-on workshop was held in Cuyahoga County about the program and career development skills, such as resumes and leadership styles. The group also discussed professional attire and professional communication skills.

Currently, the program is being operated in select counties in Ohio. If your county would be interested in learning more about the program and has a volunteer or extension staff that would be interested in assisting, contact ohio4hintern@gmail.com. If you are a student and wish to participate in the program or if you are an adult interested in being a mentor for a student enrolled in the program (or know of any businesses that would be interested in hosting an intern), please contact ohio4hintern@gmail.com.
My Junior Olympic Journey
By Rebekah Abel
Licking County

With the excitement of the Olympic Games this summer, many people may be wondering how the Olympic athletes reach this monumental achievement. I have realized just how difficult this road to success is throughout my experience in the National Junior Olympics.

Competing in the Junior Olympics is one of the first of many steps to becoming a contender for the U.S. Olympic team. I compete in trapshooting, which is one of the nine Olympic shooting events. The U.S. Olympic Shooting Team is governed by ‘USA Shooting’, just like other, more well-known sports are governed by ‘USA Swimming’, ‘USA Volleyball’, etc. USA Shooting includes all rifle, pistol, and shotgun events. Trapshooting is one of the shotgun events.

The National Junior Olympic Shotgun Championship (NJOSC) is held in July every year at the U.S. Olympic Shotgun Range in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This year, the trap portion of the competition was July 10-12.

To qualify for the National Junior Olympic Shotgun Championship (NJOSC), competitors must be under 21, and shoot at their State Junior Olympics. The top three shooters at the State Junior Olympics are automatically invited to the NJOSC.

The competition is both fun and stressful. I have met many nice people while shooting there, and gained a lot of great experience. I’ve also met and shot with current Olympic athletes and World Cup winners. During the practice day of the competition, Olympic athlete Corey Cogdell shot next to me, which was very cool. This was my second year competing at the NJOSC. Last year I placed third, and received the bronze medal. This year however, I placed a disappointing fourth, only one target behind third place.

The National Junior Olympic Shotgun Championship is one of four major national shooting competitions held every year. These competitions include: the NJOSC in Colorado, National Championship in Colorado, Fall Selection in Texas, and Spring Selection in Arizona.

Overall, my week in Colorado was very fun. I learned a lot, enjoyed shooting, and met some great people. I hope I can compete again next year and do even better. As I watch the Olympics this summer, I have a much greater appreciation of what it took for those athletes to be able to participate, as well as how disappointing it must be to fall short.
Think back to your first year in 4-H. Remember how confusing some of the information was? By the time you figured out what the four H’s stood for, your leader started talking about other things you had never before heard of like QA, OLE, DUNF, doing demonstrations, and making entries. How did you learn what all this meant? Did someone help you?

Now that you’re an older member, would you like to help new members learn about 4-H? One way teens that are passionate about 4-H can help expand the program is to become a mentor to new members. A mentor is a friend who teaches and gives advice. There are many things you can do to help a new member have more fun and less frustration during their first year. Here are some ideas:

- Teach them the 4-H pledge
- Show them how to do a demonstration
- Invite them to join your Health & Safety Speaking team
- Serve as a counselor for their camp
- Guide them during practice for skill-a-thons
- Keep them informed about upcoming deadlines
- Illustrate how to make an educational display for their project
- Encourage them to attend clinics and special events
- Explain how to complete fair entry forms, achievement records, etc.
- Sit with them during Quality Assurance training and awards programs
- Demonstrate how to care for and show their animal
- Help them during their fair show

Before you begin mentoring a new member, talk to your club advisor and ask for his or her advice about what you could do to be most helpful. In addition to helping someone else, your mentoring activities are great examples of leadership and community service to add to your achievement record, college application, and/or work resume.

Submitted by: Joyce Shriner, CFLE, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development/Hocking County Director.