

A family's legacy of farming and 4-H

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A variety of crops are raised on the Eck family farm, including cash crops corn, soybeans and wheat, as well as many animal such as hogs, cattle, chickens and lambs. Donald's mother, Velma, was the only child of Kate and Chris Senning. Kate raised a large flock of free-range chickens. Velma shared her mother's passion, raising a flock of baby chicks of her own in the family's Brooder House. Velma married Carl Eck in 1931 and they moved to the farm. They continued raising many of the same animals, including lamb. Both came from farming families. Carl's brother, Lawrence, raised flocks of 1,500 lustrous turkeys in a field.

Velma died after giving birth to her second son, James when Donald was 8 years old. When Donald was 14 years old, his father remarried Lillian Ring from Holland, and they started raising dairy cows. Ring had been involved extensively with the Purdue Extension Homemakers Clubs in Holland before she was married. She continued Homemaker Club involvement in Boone Township after her marriage to Carl. She also served on the Purdue Extension committees representing the Homemakers groups.

With the new dairy farm, Donald's farm chores now included milking the cows twice a day. Other general work with livestock tasked him with putting up silage and grind-

ing grain to feed the animals. He says the biggest job was shoveling the earcorn into the corn cribs with a scoop shovel. He joined 4-H since at 12 years of age, with projects of dairy and beef cattle, hogs, electricity and forestry. He stayed in it for eight years until age 20. Donald says 4-H gave him the opportunity to associate with different types of people and helped him be a better public speaker.

"I would not be the person I am now without the experience of being part of 4-H," Donald explains.

As a young farmer, he got interested in the 4-H council after a retired professor from Purdue came to Dubois County. He held classes for \$100 each and took students to Kentucky universities to learn firsthand from pig farms. They also visited the University of Southern Illinois to study agronomy at an orchard and berry farm. Eck credits this class to his love for growing blackberries.

The only other original 4-H council member still living, Richard Welp served nine years on council. Although he grew up a couple miles from Bretzville, Welp wasn't in 4-H as a kid. But, he enjoyed getting acquainted with 4-H through the council as a 25-year old who had recently graduated from Purdue. He had served some time in the National Guard before returning to Dubois County to work as the general manager of Dubois County Co-op

on Main Street in Huntingburg. The feed mill and fertilizer plant supplied petroleum for farmers as well as corn, beans, wheat. He said the council tied in with his business, and he enjoyed helping to build the current fairgrounds.

"The council was a good experience," says Welp. "It got me connected with the agriculture and the people involved in 4-H. It got me involved in that segment of the county, Schnellville and all around the county."

He came onto the council when they started construction near Bretzville. Welp notes local Amish helped with construction, and the Co-op provided building materials.

"What we built that first year was the swine building, cattle building, the office and the Clover Pavilion and one commercial building to display projects," Welp recalls.

Council president Thyen, put Welp in charge of bringing in the carnival rides like the classic Ferris wheel.

"They gave me strong guidelines," Welp says. "They wanted it to be 4-H centric, stay focused on 4H projects. That's still the focus."

Welp has two children, Roger in Chicago and Renee in Columbus with wife Rosie.

Both council members have seen many evolutions to 4-H and the county park throughout the years. Donald Eck says it's changed some over the years, and 4-H is not as popular because of other activities.

"In my earlier years, agriculture was the

main enterprise in Dubois County and the area," Donald said. "4-H is losing out because sports are taking over. I think we need to keep 4-H for the kids."

Another way 4-H has changed, says Donald, is the focus has shifted from agriculture and home to a concentration on other more modern subjects such as shooting sports and robotics. He says some of the original 4-H life skills projects such as cooking, clothing and gardening are not as popular.

"The pavilion used to be half full of clothing; now there's not even a rack," Donald says. "They want more modern things for kids like robots, Legos and storybook telling, which still makes the kids think and work with their parents to learn. People are changing so we have to change with the people."

Including Robotics and Innovation 4-H Club, there are currently 30 Club meetings in the county such as Blue Ribbon, Happy Go Lucky, Talent Seekers, Dutch Workers, Country Cloggers, Hoppers (Rabbit Club), Shooting Sports, Wranglers (Horse and Pony Club) and The Clover Conspirators. Ferdinand Clubs include Country Guys and Gals, Country Stars, Crusaders, Rangers and Little Rangers (Mini 4-H Club).

Aside from educating and trouble-shooting with farmers, Kenny continues to follow in his dad's footsteps as a leader of the Young Achievers 4-H Club with wife Christine in the Boone Township of Ireland.

Sparks Club *spark Your Interest in 4-H through Short-term experiences*

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Do you know what all 4-H does? Many people think the 4-H program only offers activities that relate to agriculture. However, the 4-H program teaches so much more than agriculture. In fact, a common saying in 4-H is "not just cows and cooking" to help others understand the program. As a child, even I thought that 4-H was just for farmers which is why I never joined. I now realized just how wrong my original perspective of 4-H was. The mission of Indiana 4-H is to provide real-life educational opportunities that develop young people who will have a positive impact in their communities and the world. We try to do that through multiple experiences including: club meetings, camps, workshops, trips, and the fair. In Dubois County, we offer over 70 different projects for members to choose from. There are so many opportunities through 4-H that it can even be overwhelming trying to decide what to do.

Over the years, 4-H has had to adjust what we offer in order to continue to serve our mission of providing real-life educational opportunities. There are projects and activities

available now like robotics and makers to meet the growing demands of the new technological age. Our goal is to teach kids what they will need for their futures. Science, technology, engineering, and math are some of the most in-demand careers in the future, so STEM has become an important part of what we teach today.

Another newer opportunity available through the Indiana 4-H program is a spark club. Spark clubs are fairly new to 4-H and were developed to help reach the new generations of youth and families. They have only been around for about two years. So what is a spark club? A spark club is essentially a short-term 4-H experience that teaches a certain topic. A spark club is only required to meet for six hours which usually occurs over a short period of time. Spark clubs allow for a much shorter time commitment and provide great opportunities to learn about fun topics. They are designed to cover new topics and bring new audiences to 4-H. Spark clubs do not have to cover traditional 4-H project areas. The club can cover almost any topic as long as it relates in some way to our three mission areas: science, healthy living and citizenship. Across the state of Indiana, some of the spark club topics include: fire safety, yoga, running, community service, and makers.

Here in Dubois County, we have offered spark clubs related to robotics which helped allow us to start our own permanent robotics club called the 4-H Robotics. We have also offered a makers spark club during spring break last year.

We plan to continue to offer innovated and exciting programming for youth in Dubois County. 4-H is growing youth into the true leaders they were meant to be.

