

Letter to 4-H Families: Citizenship in the COVID-19 Era

Published as we return to in-person activities

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Dear 4-H Families,

At the formation of our country, the Framers designed a grand experiment. They hypothesized that a people dedicated to self-rule could achieve more than a government led by a ruling class. Knowing the revolutionary nature of this experiment, they set up a number of safeguards to encourage its success. They created co-equal branches of government in provision of checks and balances. They shared power between municipalities, states, and the federal government. These governmental elements of the experiment are well known to all who've enjoyed an elementary social studies class.

But what about us? What about our role as a people? The Framers understood that a self-ruling people would need an equally balanced approach, so in their foundational writings they balanced liberty with justice, freedom with responsibility, and pursuit of happiness with care for the common good.

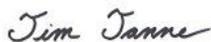
In a late-settled state like South Dakota, we still give a little more weight to the freedom, liberty, and pursuit end of the scale. That is fine. It is who we are. Yet even within that, we recognize the public benefit of indoor smoking bans, slower speed limit zones in towns, and checking our boats for zebra mussels. Our personal behavior affects others, so when we leave our homes to engage as public citizens there are certain responsibilities we must meet.

As we navigate the remainder of the COVID-19 era together, this understanding of our role as public citizens is critical. We all have an important role to play in limiting viral spread until vaccines or therapies are developed. In that vein, the following expectations guide our return to in-person 4-H programs/events:

- Stay home if you are feeling sick or symptomatic.
- Gather when you must; meet virtually when you can.
- Respect the event/program modifications designed by 4-H staff/volunteers including attendance limits.
- Maintain physical distancing with non-family members.
- Limit touching high-contact surfaces as much as possible.
- Wear a facial covering/mask or sneeze/cough into your elbow.
- Regularly wash your hands or use sanitizer.

Starting today, we are pleased to have the opportunity to resume modified in-person 4-H activities! Our willingness to serve others by meeting the expectations listed above will a) strengthen the public health of our communities and b) improve our chances of keeping SD4-H 'nearly normal' throughout the remainder of the COVID-19 era. Thank you in advance for being good citizens at 4-H programs/events in the months ahead.

In this together,



Tim Tanner, Ph.D.

Director, South Dakota 4-H Program