

2021 NAE4-HYDP Conference Report

by Mariann Wright, 4-H Area Educator & Asst. to the Regional Coordinator

The 2021 National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals (NAE4-HYDP)

Conference was held in Memphis, Tennessee

November 15-18. After switching to a virtual

format last year due to COVID-19 concerns, I was pleased that this year's conference was in-person and at a location that was reasonable for travel from Missouri. All conference activities were held at the Historic Peabody Hotel, and the theme of the event was

"Pick 4-H: It's Music to Inspire!"



NAE4-HYDP is the boots-on-the-ground component of the 4-H movement and is made up of 4-H professionals from land-grant institutions across the United States. There were 875 youth development professionals in attendance at the 2021 conference with another 350 joining virtually. I attended this conference for the first time through Title III Professional Development funds. I am happy to share my experience with other youth development professionals.

Focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

It was a busy week with general sessions and workshops each day. A major emphasis this year was the topic of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. There was a pre-conference workshop, which I attended on Monday the 15th that directly addressed these topics. The session began with Dr. Dorothy Freeman, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the National 4-H Council. Dr. Freeman shared the strategies and expectations for 4-H Youth Development Programs to become more accessible and equitable, and to create a more welcoming environment. I learned that for the first time in history, there is no racial majority in America's youth. Currently 4-H does not represent the communities and nation

that we serve. Each presenter spoke on the importance of having professionals and participates from diverse backgrounds.



4-H National Partners: NIFA, ECOP, PLWG, National 4-H Council, and NAE4-HYPD

Those attending the pre-conference priorities event had the opportunity to meet key players in the 4-H organization and to gain a better understanding of how the different 4-H entities work with each other. Representatives from National Institute

of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), National 4-H Council, NAE4-HYPD, Program Leaders Working Group (PLWG), and the Extension Council on Organizational Policy 4-H Leadership Committee (ECOP) were there to meet and tell about their responsibilities to the 4-H organization and how they are working together to address the systems' highest priority – making the 4-H Program equitable and removing barriers in order to grow the program in every community across the nation. The 4-H [Opportunity 4 All](#) [1] campaign and the [4-H Strategic Plan](#) [2] are key pieces that were discussed during the conference to actively engage all youth.

Broadening Understand through Seminars

Seminars were a more intimate way for conference participants to interact about personal interests. I chose topics that I felt would benefit me most with my work at Lincoln University Cooperative Extension in Southeast Missouri. Several workshops I attended



A space for all at the Historic Peabody Hotel

centered around programming that had been successful with other universities and have potential for implementation in the small communities in Pemiscot and Dunklin counties. A particular interest was *Healthy Habits for Life: Food-tastic Youth Programs to Build Healthy Relationships with Food* led by Andrea Lazzari from the University of Florida IFAS Extension team. This program was developed as a community-wide approach to healthy living and was comprised of three major components – a partnership with the local school district’s food service team called Try It Tuesday, a mobile produce stand that traveled to area summer school programs and camps entitled Tiny Market, and a Farmers in Training program that was facilitated at the community farmers’ market.

Other seminars that I attended helped me gain a better understanding of 4-H as a whole. The session *Inspiring Agri-Science Solutions at the National 4-H Youth Summit on Agri-*



History of 4-H told through photographs and memorabilia displays

Science presented by Deb Dietrich, Chair of the National 4-H Youth Summit on Agri-Science and Area 4-H Educator at Penn State Extension and Freeman Thompson, Director of Education Programs at National 4-H Council discussed one of national opportunities available to 4-H youth. Lincoln University Cooperative Extension’s (LUCE) 4-H PYD team plans to participate in the 2022 summit by taking a delegation to Washington D.C. for the event. The delegation will have the

opportunity to learn about the many facets of agri-science and begin developing an action plan to implement at home that addresses a challenge facing their community surrounding agriculture, food security, or sustainability. Information regarding the program’s background, goals, and outcomes was presented to those attending. Learning more about the [4-H Youth Summit Series](#) and its history, goals, and outcomes was very beneficial and the knowledge learned will be used to assist the youth delegates representing LUCE from southeast Missouri.

Additional seminars that I attended were:

- *How to Conduct an Effective Meeting using Correct Parliamentary Procedure* presented by University of Tennessee Extension
- *LaunchSkills: An Innovative Approach for Launching Youth in High Need Communities to Success* presented by North Dakota State University
- *YOU-niversity – Getting 4-Hers to College* presented by West Virginia University Extension
- *Leading with the EXPLORE Texas 4-H Curriculum Series* presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Services
- *4-H On Demand Resource Library* presented by University of Minnesota Extension 4-H Youth Development
- *“E Pluribus Unum” – Citizenship Programming Across the Lifespan* presented by Purdue Extension Ripley County

Networking & Exploring to Form Stronger Connections

The conference committee did a great job at filling every minute of the week with information and activities. In addition to the assortment of seminars and daily general sessions, opportunities to get out and explore our host city were encouraged. Daily walking tours of Downtown Memphis highlighted unique aspects of the city like its connection to the Mississippi River and its diverse history in music. I also had the chance to visit the [National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel](#) [4]. The museum explores the history of the Civil Rights Movement with exhibits spanning the arrival of Americas first slave ships to the change-makers of today.



Historical sites in Memphis include the Main Street Pedestrian Mall and the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel

One of the most beneficial aspects of attending the NAE4-HYPD Conference was connecting with other 4-H Youth Development Professionals. Speaking with educators about their



experiences working with youth gave me an instant sense of camaraderie. Hearing about programs that are thriving in their communities as well as the ones that never met their full potential inspired and encouraged me in my own work. Wednesday night was designated as “States’ Night Out”. This was a time when all conference attendees from each university/state were encouraged to meet up for dinner and networking. I was the only staff attending from Lincoln University and was very pleased to be invited to join the group from the University of Missouri. During dinner, I was able to connect with other 4-H educators from Southeast Missouri. We spoke about how we might be able to collaborate in the future. Next year the conference will be held in Madison, Wisconsin. I hope that I will be able to attend and encourage other members of LUCE’s 4-H Positive Youth Development team to attend, also.



Dining with fellow Missouri 4-H professionals during the “States Night Out” and enjoying dessert at the Awards Banquet

Overall, the NAE4-HYPD Conference was a great experience. I believe being active in one’s professional association is important to the growth and success of one’s career. I learned invaluable information regarding the benefits, goals, and opportunities provided by the [National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals](#) [5]. I look forward to becoming a member of one of the NAE4-HYPD Working Groups, participating in more professional development webinars, and attending future conferences. I left the conference feeling excited about all the possibilities for LUCE 4-H!

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Resources

- [1] Link to webpage – <https://4-h.org/opportunity4all/>
- [2] Link to file - <https://4-h.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/4-H-2025-Vision.pdf>
- [3] Link to file – <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Az0DymY73HKPnB-3Ws7nFOceMkBfYfQM/view?usp=sharing>
- [4] Link to webpage – <https://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/>
- [5] Link to webpage – <https://nae4hydp.org>