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# 2022 National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals Conference Report

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# 2022 NAE4-HYDP Conference Report

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

The 76<sup>th</sup> Annual National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals (NAE4-HYDP) Conference was held October 9<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup> in Madison Wisconsin. This year's conference theme ***Fourward Together*** reflects the mission of 4-H to be an inclusive education program for youth, teaching life and living skills. *Fourward Together* is a play on the Wisconsin state motto, Forward.

NAE4-HYDP is the professional association for 4-H staff from all land-grant institutions in the United States. Its mission is to build a positive youth development network by providing up-to-date learning, leadership development, and mentoring opportunities while integrating scholarship, research, and practice. I was one of more than 1,000 youth development professionals who attended this year's conference.



After attending NAE4-HYDP for the first time last year, I decided to apply to be a poster presenter at the 2022 event. I was fortunate enough to be chosen to share my program *Lights, Camera, Awareness* on this national level. I was able to participate in the 2022 NAE4-HYDP Conference in part due to the funds awarded through the Title III Professional Development program and I appreciate having the opportunity to share the experience with other LUCE youth development professionals.

## Addressing Social & Emotional Wellness Among 4-H Youth, Volunteers, and Professionals

A National Priorities Day preceded the official start of the 2022 conference. The foci for this event were Mental Health and 4-H programming that can address mental health issues. The event kicked-off with a discussion on how the five 4-H leadership branches are working together to meet the needs of the organization and support everyone involved. The panel

was comprised of a representative from each of the five 4-H leadership partners -- National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), National 4-H Council, NAE4-HYDP, Program



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

Leaders Working Group (PLWG), and the Extension Council on Organizational Policy 4-H Leadership Committee (ECOP).

The need for naming mental health as a 4-H priority was evident as the leadership panel presented data on the state of today's youth

when it pertains to emotional and social well-being. It was stated that 25% of youth are experiencing depression symptoms;

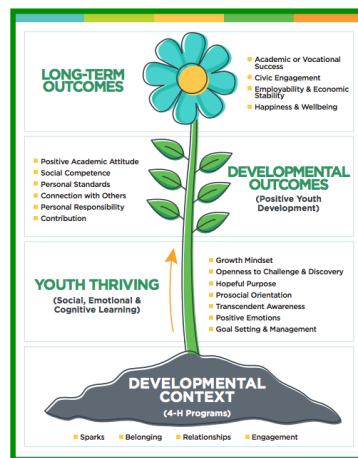
20% are experiencing anxiety symptoms; and 1 in 3 youth say that they feel a sense of sadness or hopelessness. Another startling statistic that was presented stated that there has been a 50% increase in girls' ER visits for attempted suicide in recent years. Data was pulled from the [Protecting Youth Mental Health Report](#) [1] conducted by The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory.

One-way that 4-H is working to address the mental health of our youth is by talking about it. According to a [4-H Youth Mental Health Survey](#) [2] commissioned by National 4-H Council to explore teens' perceptions and experiences around mental health, 75% of the 1,516 youth surveyed felt that a mental health stigma still exists. In fact, youth said

they are three-times more likely to feel peer pressure to hide their feelings than to drink or do drugs. Bringing

attention to the importance of mental health awareness and education is part of the 4-H Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach not only to provide skills but also to strengthen youths' sense of identity and social, emotional, and cognitive well-being.

The [4-H Thriving Model](#) [3][4] is the theory of change for PYD in 4-H.



*4-H Thriving Model*

Following the panel discussion, Ms. Dasha Kelly Hamilton, a creative change agent leveraging the creative process toward human and social wellness, spoke on the importance of encouraging all youth to speak their truth and validating their experiences, voices, and feelings. Ms. Hamilton reminded the 4-H professionals in the room to remember that the delivery of the message, good or bad, doesn't diminish the value of what the speaker says or feels. The keynote address tied the mental health priority to 4-H's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts that aim to create [Opportunity 4 All](#) [5].

## Engaging with Others through Poster Presentation

One way that I became more involved in the association was by applying to be a poster presenter at NAE4-HYDP. I was very pleased to be one of thirty-eight professionals to be selected to showcase a program for my peers. The acceptance rate for poster and workshop presenters for the 2022 conference was 34%. The poster that I shared highlighted a program developed to engage Bootheel teens in telling stories from and about their community – *Lights, Camera, Awareness*.



*Posters were displayed throughout the conference with a staffed presentation session on Wednesday afternoon.*

The *Lights, Camera, Awareness* program gives youth a platform to inform their communities about the issues that are important to them. Participants accomplish this through the art and techniques of filmmaking, interviewing skills, and public speaking. The inaugural focus of the *Lights, Camera, Awareness* program highlighted black business owners in the Missouri Bootheel. Youth who participated in the *Lights, Camera, Awareness*

program enhanced their ability to interview, redirect questions, and summarize answers for the video audience. They also gained knowledge of issues affecting their community and both the hard and soft skills needed for daily interpersonal skill use. Those who watched the videos gained a better understanding of being a black business owner, competing with established businesses.



In addition to showcasing information in a poster format, I also had the opportunity to introduce conference attendees to the videos themselves. A QR code was displayed that linked to the [Bootheel 4-H YouTube Channel](#) [6].

## Learning through Workshops

Although the conference was comprised of keynote addresses, awards presentations, and interactive roundtables, the largest and most informative portion of the professional development event was the workshop sessions. There were a variety of workshops offered during each session. I chose to attend workshops that focused on topics and subject areas that would be of interest for my stakeholders in Southeast Missouri.

Two of the workshops that focused on agriculture literacy were *Soil to Storage: Expanding Youth Knowledge on Gardens, Food Preservation, and Everything in Between!* presented by South Dakota State University Extension and *Nebraska Explodes with Ag Literacy Festivals* presented by Nebraska Extension. During these two workshops, I was able to gain valuable information on ways to introduce youth to agriculture and gardening and insight on how to replicate programming. I plan to use knowledge gained in the GardenGreen program in partnership with community gardens in both Pemiscot and Dunklin counties.

Additional workshops that I attended were:

- *4-H GeoGuest Forward* presented by West Virginia University Extension
- *Culture, Cuisine, and Conversations: Travel the World with 4-H* presented by University of Illinois Extension
- *A Beginners Guide to Podcasting* presented by Rutgers Cooperative Extension
- *Why Do People Act That Way? Understanding Differences – Diversity, Inclusion, & Belonging* presented by University of Florida/IFAS Extension
- *4-H Meeting Youth Needs through Creative Arts* presented by Oklahoma State University Extension and the Communication & Expressive Arts Working Group
- *Click2Engineering: Increasing Engineering Engagement for All* presented by Penn State Extension

## Exploring a New City and Strengthening Professional Relationships

If traveling to a new city for a meeting or conference, I always try to carve-out time to learn about the local culture and explore the area. The conference organizers did a great job of planning fun activities to share “Wisconsin culture” with conference attendees.

Throughout the week we were entertained by the University of Wisconsin marching band, a polka ensemble, and 4-H youth. A

“Welcome to Madison” reception also provided an opportunity to try a variety of regional foods. The menu consisted of beer-

cheese soup, Waldorf salad, cheddarwurst, and hot apple cider. Dairy was certainly the star of the culinary goings-on of the 2022 NAE4-HYDP Conference. Ice cream from the locally famed Babcock Dairy at the University of Wisconsin was a must-have while in Madison, and I made it my personal mission to eat cheese curbs everyday.



*The conference site was within walking distance of the Wisconsin State Capital and the University of Wisconsin – Madison.*



*Connecting with 4-H National Program Leader from USDA-NIFA Dr. Bonita Williams who is a former Lincoln University employee was a treat!*

The opportunity to connect with other 4-H professionals and national partners is a highlight of the NAE4-HYDP Conference. Sharing experiences and knowledge with others is what makes this professional development opportunity so valuable.

LUCE 4-H State Specialist Adrian Hendricks also attended the 2022 conference. During the annual “States’ Night Out”, we joined the rest of the Missouri delegation from the University of Missouri and enjoyed a dinner together while getting to know one another. It is my hope that Missouri, and especially

Lincoln University, can increase its participation in the association and gain momentum on the national level when it comes to 4-H and positive youth development programming.

Participating in the 2022 NAE4-HYDP Conference was a rewarding experience. Being a poster presenter was new for me and pushed me to strengthen my personal communication skills. I plan to continue to increase my involvement in NAE4-HYDP by joining a National Working Group and submitting programs for recognition. The [National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals](#) [7] encourages and supports its members to continue developing skills, cultivate relationships, and engage in scholarship. I look forward to maintaining my membership and attending the 2023 conference planned to take place in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

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## Resources

- [1] Link to file – <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>
- [2] Link to file – <https://4-h.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/4-H-Mental-Health-Report-6.1.20-FINAL.pdf>
- [3] Link to webpage – <https://helping-youth-thrive.extension.org/home/>
- [4] Link to file – <https://helping-youth-thrive.extension.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Alignment-of-PYD-Frameworks-with-Thrive.pdf>
- [5] Link to webpage – <https://4-h.org/about/equity-and-inclusion/#!menu>
- [6] Link to video playlist – [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIoaZMHlDdl4CnML1lbVZ3Qfe\\_GDZf13y](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIoaZMHlDdl4CnML1lbVZ3Qfe_GDZf13y)
- [7] Link to webpage – <https://nae4hydp.org>