

# Using Youth Voices

A newsletter based on a Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration Innovation Grant, *Using Youth Voices to Transform New York State 4-H into a Nationally Recognized Antiracist*

January 2022

## Introducing our guest columnist

This edition of *Using Youth Voices* features Diondra Dyer as guest columnist for *In Their Own Words*.

Diondra graduated recently from LeMoyne College and is pursuing a career in the medical field. She has been involved in many aspects of 4-H and continues to serve as a volunteer to CCE-Madison's 4-H Youth Development programming. According to Jamila Walida Simon, NYS 4-H Civic Engagement Specialist, Cornell University, Diondra will serve as an alumni advisor on the 2022 State Teen Action Representative Retreat (STARR) Planning Committee.

Be sure to check out Diondra's unique suggestions for 4-H!

Do you know a 4-H'er or a 4-H alum with ideas about what NYS 4-H needs to do to transform 4-H into a welcoming, nurturing and nationally respected antiracist organization? We're looking for guest columnists to share what they believe needs to be done to improve 4-H.

Please let one of the *Using Youth Voices* project team know if you want to recommend a young person as our next *In Their Own Words* columnist! See the project team's contact information here.

## Using Youth Voices Project Team

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## In Their Own Words

Diondra Dyer, Guest Columnist



When I think of 4-H, I think of the multitude of opportunities they have to offer, but not everyone may know that. Before joining 4-H, I did not know what could be out there for me. After joining, over the years I was finally able to have a better idea of what 4-H really stood for. When I was first approached to join 4-H, it was to participate in my county's mentoring club. This program was one of many that my county had. Although I was unaware they were in fact in each county all over the state.

As time went on, I was informed that there were different statewide events that I could participate in. These events would be the time when each county was able to come together, team build, and get to know others that they may not have met if it weren't for these moments. I was lucky enough to attend these events through funding the organization had that helped me pay to go. Once I went, I realized that 4-H was more than my small town. I fell in love with everything that 4-H had to offer. After going to these events as a participant, I then began to immerse myself in the organization and planning of these events. In my junior year of high school, I was even awarded a scholarship to attend Cornell's Summer College. I was able to give back to communities by volunteering my time and even educating and encouraging the youth I was working with to do the same. If I had never been informed of these different opportunities that 4-H could guide me to participate in, I may not be where I am today.

NYS 4-H has a goal of improving 4-H and transforming it into an organization that is nurturing and welcoming to all. I think they are doing a great job at this so far. 4-H has been a very inclusive organization throughout my entire time participating. As long as they continue to improve they will have an even more inclusive organization. However, I feel as though 4-H is not as widely known as it should be in regards to how diverse it is. When I asked others of many backgrounds what 4-H was, many did not have an accurate idea of what it was and what it could do for youth participants.

I think my suggestion is to advocate and educate all communities on what 4-H really is. Having alumni volunteers come in and explain what 4-H was for them and how those who participate can really benefit from all of the opportunities this organization has to offer is a great start. I believe doing this will help encourage young people to join. On a different note, I have noticed that the overall funding that I have seen for many events I've participated in has decreased. The more we spread the word about NYS 4-H and get more people involved, the more we can hopefully increase funding for a variety of events to assist those who might not otherwise be able to participate, such as myself.

I'd like to conclude by saying that 4-H has allowed me to give back and receive many benefits that I believe all should know about. I would hope that everyone that has participated in 4-H in some way has the same feelings as I do. This is one of the most inclusive organizations that only strives to better themselves and others as each year goes on.

## Resources, research & more!

### ACT FOR CHANGE TEEN ANTI-RACISM PROGRAM



The Act for Change Teen Anti-racism Program uses peer dialogue to challenge racism and racist structures and builds bridges across created differences. It is unlike other anti-racism programs in that it relies on the input and participation of its teen participants to make a change.

<http://ulster.cce.cornell.edu/4-h-youth-development/act-for-change-teen-anti-racism-program-summer-2021>

For more information, contact Melanie Forstrom, CCE Ulster County, [maf357@cornell.edu](mailto:maf357@cornell.edu)

### OTHERING & BELONGING INSTITUTE



The Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley brings together researchers, organizers, stakeholders, communicators, and policymakers to identify and eliminate the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society in order to create transformative change. Check out the institute's programs and research at:

<https://belonging.berkeley.edu/our-story>

### ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIPS



Just as a system of roots supports and nourishes a tree as it develops and grows, nurturing relationships with adults provide a foundation for young people to thrive. Check out this series of podcasts from the Search Institute.

[https://app.resonaterecordings.com/hosting/rooted-in-relationships-search-institute?utm\\_campaign=Inbound%20Marketing&utm\\_medium=email&hsmi=200447371&hsenc=p2ANqtz-89jNvjbcwVrNSp-UVIquepKK1m-B8SVKpkiMKIxYSMIZaaSo7roWDb1sHrVDowrofp26KLFV4-O11aIE3XzYvWn4g&utm\\_content=200448414&utm\\_source=hs\\_email](https://app.resonaterecordings.com/hosting/rooted-in-relationships-search-institute?utm_campaign=Inbound%20Marketing&utm_medium=email&hsmi=200447371&hsenc=p2ANqtz-89jNvjbcwVrNSp-UVIquepKK1m-B8SVKpkiMKIxYSMIZaaSo7roWDb1sHrVDowrofp26KLFV4-O11aIE3XzYvWn4g&utm_content=200448414&utm_source=hs_email)



### About Using Youth Voices

The objective of the *Using Youth Voices* project is to create a series of mechanisms to give youth a vehicle for sharing their ideas for transforming NYS 4-H into an antiracist organization.

These are the mechanisms being used:

- **In Their Own Words:** Youth will be invited to be guest columnists in e-newsletters to share their ideas.
- **Where Are They Now?:** interviews with 4-H alumni will be conducted to give these young people an opportunity to reflect on what helped them most to be successful in 4-H and what recommendations they have for transforming 4-H into an inclusive organization for all youth.
- **Youth Voice:** A series of podcasts featuring interviews with 4-H alumni, current 4-H'ers and community members to share what they believe is needed to happen to transform 4-H into a respected antiracist organization.

All suggestions will be culled from these efforts to identify how to create a transformative antiracist NYS 4-H organization.

### Using Youth Voices Project Advisory Committee

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