

Can you imagine how expensive it is for a little girl to buy a show horse, keep it at a barn, and work with a trainer? Or how challenging it is, in an adult's world of horseshows-as-business, to learn all a little girl could want to about her horse? And how could that little girl have the opportunity to lead, or speak in public, or mentor anyone—in a word, wring all the character development and growth available from the experience of riding a horse?

4-H gave me those opportunities. Few parents can afford the massive commitment of finances and time necessary for horse sports. And going it alone, there is a world of knowledge to obtain and few resources. But in 4-H, this little girl was afforded a group of other little girls just like her. She was given a set of manuals about her horse ("Sugar," the courageous, patient first of several) and a record-keeping system to help her learn how much it cost. She had a trainer—maybe not the best one in the county or the state, but one who helped her because she was rooting for her success.

This little girl enrolled in a public speaking competition, where a mentor took an interest in her and trained her to compete nationally. She read the manuals, memorized them all, and competed in a game show where she proved her knowledge about her horse. Later, she mentored and taught other little girls who wanted to do the same.

This little girl graduated high school with the confidence to speak in front of a crowd, the belief that she had something to offer someone younger than she, and a deep desire to know and to engage with the world around her.

I, Anna Brown, am that little girl, and 4-H made me the eager, skilled, confident person I am today. Please financially support the 4-H program so that other little girls and boys can get all the character development and growth available from owning an animal or participating in a project—just like I did.