

Hi 4-H Family,

This email is a follow-up to the email sent from the state office regarding face-to-face programs and the new guideline that no face-to-face MSU Extension youth programs take place before September 1, 2020. This includes all 4-H programs.

I know that this announcement is sad and disappointing to many in our community and this has been a heartbreaking week. Although many programs and events are pursuing virtual options, the loss of face-to-face options for so long is deeply felt. You may have lots of questions about what this means and what will happen. I am working closely with colleagues, MSU Extension leadership, fair board, county associations, and clubs to find solutions for what this means for the Eaton County Fair and other summer programs and more information will be shared in the coming weeks. Although I may not have specific answers at the moment, below are some frequently asked questions:

Why was this decision made?

Youth safety and security are a guiding principle of Michigan 4-H; this decision is a reflection of that and our ongoing commitment to helping Michigan youth be physically and emotionally safe. Although the right thing to do for the health and wellbeing of MSU Extension staff, volunteers, program participants and all Michiganders, this is still a heartbreaking decision.

Is 4-H canceled until September 1?

No! There are many options to explore for virtual 4-H programming. Many offerings are now free and most opportunities are available to anyone from anywhere. Lots of programs can be found at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/rlr/index>. Additionally, many clubs are holding club meetings or project meetings virtually and finding ways to connect - whether that be Facebook groups, virtual scavenger hunts, Zoom meetings, or watching videos. If your club or project area needs help with transitioning to 4-H opportunities done virtually, please contact me!

Is the Eaton County Fair canceled?

As of this email, no. The Eaton County Fair is not a 4-H fair and is managed and run by the Eaton County Agricultural Society, the fair board and fair superintendents, not 4-H or MSU Extension. We are working on a set of guidelines for the relationship between 4-H and fair and what that will mean for participation in this year's fair. There are some 4-H run experiences that normally happen in-person at the fair; virtual options for these experiences are being explored. Decisions regarding fairs in Michigan will occur with guidance from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), the Michigan Association of Fairs and Exhibitions (MAFE), and the orders set forth by Governor Whitmer.

What will happen with the Jr Livestock Association Auction and Small Animal Association Auction?

These experiences are run and managed by 4-H and we are exploring virtual options.

What would happen if fair can't occur in-person?

Although fair board is still planning for fair to happen in-person as of this email, it is important to be prepared with plans to change as the situation evolves. If the decision is made that fair cannot happen in-person, our community will do its best to still offer options for youth to exhibit virtually and showcase their projects and work from the past year.

What is happening with other 4-H events, like 4-H Exploration Days, State 4-H Horse Show, State 4-H Shooting Sports Tournament, etc.?

Event coordinators and committees are making decisions about each event whether it will become virtual or postponed or canceled. Information will be shared as soon as it is available. Regardless, all program participants will receive a full refund for any out-of-pocket registration fees already paid for affected programs. Staff will be in contact with those registered regarding this matter in the coming weeks.

With rapidly changing information and a lot of resources and online learning being shared, I am now posting these update emails on our newsletter website for reference. Please follow the most recent letter posted for guidance on changes from the state and from our organization. You can find them at https://www.canr.msu.edu/eaton/eaton_county_4_h/4_h_newsletter.

I greatly appreciate this community working together as we figure out how to move forward, stay safe, and stay healthy. I know you may have a lot of questions, please feel free to ask and I will do my best to find answers.

Thanks,

Kristy

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Pronouns: She, her, hers

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