

## **Whitney Pierce--Chowan County Board of Commissioners**

Prior to attending the 2016 Youth Voice component of the NCACC's Annual Conference, I was expected to attend a Board of Commissioners' meeting. Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts, as well as full agendas with pressing issues, I was unable to attend and present at a meeting. However, by attending Youth Voice, I feel much more prepared to approach and speak to our local county commissioners. In an effort to fulfill my assignment, my 4-H Agent--Ms. Beth Stanley, asked me to speak at our annual "Report to the People" to our county commissioners and county manager. I felt much more prepared and able to speak about all of the great things 4-H has allotted me, including the opportunity to attend the Youth Summit.

For some reason our county commissioners choose not to attend this annual event. It is very disheartening for someone like me and my fellow 4-Hers who have previously attended. I was fortunate enough to share my table though during our breakfast event with Commissioner Ted Godwin of Johnston County. Even though our counties are incredibly different some of the issues his youth face are right in line with ours. It was nice to have this opportunity to speak with him. I have included my speech below and one thing I plan to follow up with is making sure some of our county commissioners make an effort to attend next year. During this year's election, our county has the opportunity to elect three totally new county commissioners. Along with my 4-H agent and past Youth Summit participant, Charles Maus, we hope to meet with the new commissioners and county manager to really explain this opportunity we have been so fortunate to have and hopefully encourage their attendance at next year's event.

**Purpose:** 2016 Report to the People—Annual Briefing of Extension Programs to County Commissioners, County Manager, and Extension Advisory Members

**Location:** Chowan County Cooperative Extension Office

**Date:** September 6, 2016

When Ms. Beth asked me to speak and describe what 4-H means to me, I realized I have never really stopped to evaluate what this program truly means to me. However, now that I am a senior closing my final chapter of high school, it is very easy for me to see the tremendous effect this program has had on my life. I have been enrolled in 4-H programs since the age of 5, and now at 17 I cannot even begin to remember all the activities I have been involved in. Because I started at such a young age, 4-H has literally been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. From the outside looking in, a non 4-Her would see all of the leadership, citizenship, and program titles and think “that’s what 4-H teaches you and that’s what it means to be a 4-Her.” It is true that you gain a large amount of leadership and citizenship skills from being involved in 4-H programs, but from my standpoint being a 4-Her means so much more than that! 4-H has given me a steady place to count on, has helped me create relationships that will last a lifetime, helped me flourish in many aspects of life teaching me things that no curriculum ever could, and has ultimately shaped me into the person I am today. Without my participation in the many 4-H programs, I am not really sure what I would have done with all of my spare time, especially as a young person here in Edenton. I have done everything from being a summer intern with Ms. Beth to helping plan programs, attending congress, teen retreat, and recently the 2016 Youth Summit representing Chowan County. Although I still have some more time with 4-H, the Youth Summit was sort of a culmination of my 4-H experiences. It gave me the opportunity to learn alongside other 4-Hers who are passionate about 4-H and their communities.

This experience opened my eyes to the fact we are all just teenagers trying to make a difference in this big world. It is my hope that you, as our county commissioners, will consider attending this event in the future.

I feel as though my participation with Chowan County 4-H has made me a more credible student and contributing citizen of Chowan County. My many experiences and volunteer hours through 4\_H even helped me gain acceptance into the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics during my tenth grade year (which was always a dream of mine), and now as I apply to colleges, my many 4-H programs and hours will be documented in order to put me one step above the rest. Overall, 4-H has transformed my life in too many ways to count and has come to mean more to me than I ever realized before now. Thanks to this program I have become a more well rounded and happier young adult. I could not be more thankful for this program and my 4-H agent, Ms. Beth, who has had such a positive impact on my life during the past six years that we have shared in Chowan County 4-H. She, along with the entire staff in the Chowan County Cooperative Extension Office, have gone above and beyond to make my 4-H experience the best it could possibly be. In closing, I would like to say that not only am I proud to be called a 4-Her, but my parents as well are thankful that I have been able to participate in a program as great as this one that has helped me mature and become who I am today.