Richmond County 4-H is a youth development program designed to help kids between the ages of 5 and 18 lead positive, productive, and fulfilling lives. Through afterschool programs, clubs, school enrichment, service projects, leadership retreats, and summer programs, 4-H teaches life skills and provides opportunities to succeed and gain new experiences.

At each 4-H event, a pledge that describes each of the 4-Hs is recited. If you recall, in a previous article I explained the meaning of one “H,” Hands. The “H” we will focus on today however, is Head; “I pledge my Head to clearer thinking.”

Throughout the year, 4-Hers have several opportunities to think and learn. Active club members complete a project on a topic of their choice. A project can fall under 33 different categories and range from learning how to sew, taking care of an animal, planting or growing something in a garden, cooking/food and nutrition, setting a table, etc. Upon completion of the project, 4-Hers share their new knowledge in the form of a project record book and/or presentation. Project record books are similar to a scrapbook with 7-10 sections of information collected and learned during the project. Presentations are public speaking opportunities in which the 4-Her talks about, demonstrates, or explains the project in a 5-12 minute speech. Both avenues allow and encourage youth to learn a new skill and show off what they learned. This helps build self confidence and instills that hard work pays off.

Another way 4-Hers learn by doing is managing their own clubs. Each club elects its own officers in which youth learn how to cast a vote and run for an office. Once officers are elected, parliamentary procedure is used to carry out the meetings. Minutes have to be taken at each meeting and kept up with for at least 5 years. Managing their own clubs teaches youth to be civic minded and very organized.

Teambuilding is a large part of 4-H activities. Though many competitions are done individually, club members help each other set and achieve their goals. 4-Hers work together to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Mental health is also an important part of youth culture today. With added stresses that exist in this generation that were not a part of the past such as screen time, social media, etc. youth have to learn coping skills and how to find balance in their world. Several 4-H curriculums focus on a positive mental health, feeling good about yourself, and making good decisions.

“Head” to me is the most important “H” for youth to master. If you can learn how to learn, manage, and think, the other three “Hs” all fall into place. If you are interested in being a 4-H volunteer and sharing your expertise and time with the youth of Richmond County, or if you have youth that are ready to learn and experience new things, call 910.997.8255 and speak with me, Catherine Shelley, Richmond County 4-H Agent.