

Joe Kreitzer learns to lead in Washington County and Washington, D.C.



Joe Kreitzer instructs young 4-H'ers in archery.

4-H opens opportunities for youth to make new friends, learn new skills and gain great life experience. For one Washington County 4-H'er, his time with [Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development](#) [1] led to an experience he never expected: an opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., and engage legislators in discussions about University of Wisconsin-Extension programs and issues.

Throughout his nine years in 4-H (and two years before that as a Cloverbud), Joseph Kreitzer has been an active participant in shooting sports and youth leadership programs, even becoming a part of the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association and 4-H Ambassadors board when he started high school. He credits his time in 4-H with helping develop his communication and leadership skills, and for giving him the opportunity to serve as part of the Wisconsin delegation to the 2012 Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) conference.

"I never imagined I would travel to Washington by myself, join up with a group of people I'd never met before and be a voice in these important conversations," he says. "I learned a lot on the trip, including a lot about how Cooperative Extension works and how it looks different in every state." As part of the Wisconsin PILD delegation, Joe learned about public policy and the legislative process and then met with Wisconsin legislators to discuss important issues facing the country.

Joe is a senior in high school, so his time as a regularly enrolled 4-H member is nearly at its end. But some lessons will stay with him.

"I'm not sure what I want to study after high school, maybe materials engineering or maybe public policy," he says. "But no matter what I do, 4-H has given me the need to be a leader and make a difference in the world."

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Links:

[1] <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/>

[2] <mailto:4h@uwex.edu>