Hands to Larger Service....

As 4-Hers we are all familiar with the 4-H Pledge, but sometimes it is worth looking at its meaning. 4-H youth and volunteers are well known for their generosity. This year at Discovery Day several 4-H clubs teamed up to raise money for the wildfires that swept the plains.

"Wildfires in early March swept across the plains in regions of Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Ranchers in those devastated areas scrambled to protect their families, neighbors, livestock and homes. Winds gusting..."

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4-Hers and Local High School Students Engage in Mock Debate, and Meet Elected Officials at Youth in Government Day

(Pontiac, Michigan)--- On Monday, May 15, 2017, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners (BOC) hosted its annual Youth in Government Day. High school students from across the county attended and debated mock legislation, heard from their County elected officials, and got a firsthand look at the capabilities of an experienced K-9 unit from the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office. The goal of the event was to emphasize the importance of civic engagement for young people, and specifically to encourage Oakland County youth to be informed about the many facets of local government, as well as active in the politics and policies that impact their lives.

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4-Hers and Local High School Students Engage in Mock Debate, and Meet Elected Officials at Youth in Government Day (Continued from page 1)

“When you think about government, you usually just think about elected officials only—this event really helped me to see the big picture and recognize all of the others that work at making our county an amazing place to live and work,” said Margaret Cooney, a student from Milford High School.

An important component of being an effective and engaged citizen is the ability to think critically about a wide range of issues. Darren Bagley, an Educator on the Leadership & Civic Engagement Team at MSU Extension 4-H, challenged attendees to think in new and dynamic ways about a variety of policy issues, and to thoughtfully evaluate news stories and other information they may see on social media. He and other members of the 4-H team also facilitated the mock debate sessions, alongside representatives from the Health Division, Animal Control and the Sheriff’s Office who served as expert resources for the mock debate topics: a soda tax, pit bull ban and body cameras on police officers.

“The input and expertise of MSU Extension 4-H staff, in conjunction with the incredible efforts of the Board of Commissioners staff, really helped make the Board’s Youth in Government Day program exciting and engaging,” said Commissioner Shelley Goodman Taub, who served as emcee for the day. “I am so glad I was able to participate. It was a really special day for the kids.”

Oakland County Commissioner Dave Woodward shared his experience of running for office at a young age and emphasized the important role young people play in bringing fresh ideas and voices into the political and legislative spheres. Forensic Lab Chemist Rachel Scott presented on the techniques they utilize to process a crime scene and identify illegal substances, and discussed her role in presenting evidence in court. The Oakland County Sheriff’s Office brought a Lenco Bear armored vehicle that, along with K-9 Blitz and Deputy Mike Richardson, was a huge hit with the kids.

Phil Bertolini, Chief Information Officer/Deputy County Executive, talked to the students about the wide range of career opportunities at the County, especially in the IT field where graduates specializing in cyber security can earn six figures right out of college. He also discussed the need for workers in the skilled trades. Treasurer Andy Meisner and Paul Walton, Chief Assistant to Prosecutor Jessica R. Cooper, spoke at the event as well. After making her remarks, Clerk/Register of Deeds Lisa Brown stuck around to help eligible students register to vote.

Oakland County’s Information Technology/eGovernment Team worked closely with BOC staff to incorporate social media into this year’s event. In a first for the County, a custom Snapchat geofilter was created for students to share images during the program. IT staff live tweeted throughout the day and #OaklandCounty was trending on Twitter during the event. The collaboration between multiple County departments helped make the 2017 Youth in Government Day a big success.

Paul Van Ermen, an AP U.S. Government teacher at Birmingham Groves High School called the event a well-planned and well-executed program. “Thanks to the Board of Commissioners for leading this effort,” Van Ermen said. “Policy issues, including background and student debate, were very valuable. I will have future students participate again next year!”

Students from Avondale, Birmingham Groves, Brandon, Clarkston, Ferndale University, Lakeland, Lake Orion, Milford, Oakland Christian, Oak Park, Walled Lake Northern and Walled Lake Western high schools attended the 2017 Youth in Government Day and are hoping for more in 2017-2018 school year.

For more information about the event, please contact the Board of Commissioners at 248-858-0100 or visit www.oakgov.com/boc.