

Becoming a 4-H Agent

Our county 4-H agents help to make such a big impact on their 4-H'ers lives. My 4-H agent, Mrs. April Bowman, has influenced and helped me with my speeches, planning county events and with completing applications that led me to win the AIRE (Application, Interview, Resume & Essay) contest and get inducted into the 4-H Honor Club.

But what exactly, does it take to become a 4-H agent?

April Bowman's formal education for the job started at NC State University, where she obtained her Bachelors of Science in Agricultural Education. Most 4-H agents have degrees in some form of education, or other areas such as Psychology, Political Science, and History.

Having a college degree does not immediately take one to 4-H agent status. First, you start out as an Assistant 4-H agent for six years. If you have your masters degree, then after the six years you can request a title promotion. The promotion is based on the difference you make while an assistant. If you are approved, you advance to Associate Extension agent. After two years of being an associate, you can request another title promotion. If accepted, you are then an Extension Agent. The State prefers you to have a Masters degree before you take on the job or you can obtain your Masters degree while on the job using tuition waivers at any UNC college or university.

You really have to love what you do, as the starting salary is \$34,000. Roughly, fifty percent of your salary comes from the county and the other 50% comes from the state. The county budget money also covers van transportation, supplies, meeting costs, computers, and copies, etc. for the 4-H program. 4-H is a part of Extension, which can be found in the county and state budgets under Education; therefore whether 4-H continues operating, all depends on how the county votes for the budget.

I then asked Mrs. April how she started in 4-H, and what made her want to become a 4-H agent. She said before she was even old enough to be in 4-H, her mother was a club leader for the Young Ranchers 4-H club in Johnston County. From this club she moved on to a horse club, and served on the livestock judging team. In High School, she joined Future

Farmers of America (now called the National FFA Organization), and taught Agricultural Education for one year for Stokes County schools.

The 4-H agent position in Stokes County was vacant for many months. She applied after her year of teaching and was unemployed for three months, waiting for the state to review her application and fill the position. She held the Stokes County 4-H agent position for 8 years before transferring to Forsyth County.

Mrs. April says the favorite part of her job is working with the youth, finding it 'very rewarding'. She sees them enter the 4-H program in their early elementary years, grow in community service, public speaking, life skills, and into leadership positions by the time they leave for college. She continues to do what 4-H agents have done for over 100 years now, making the best even better for the generations to come.

Laura Hutchins – Forsyth County