4-H Youth Development

**Junior High Academic Conference** is an educational program on the campus of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This year’s event was held through the week of June 9-12, 2015. Participants received intensive training in their 4-H project areas under the supervision of university faculty and specialists and explored related career opportunities. The conference provides a variety of rewarding and fun-filled experiences in the classroom, outdoors and laboratory settings.

Three Smith County 4-H’ers became University of Tennessee students for a week as they attended this year’s Academic Conference, Campbell Baker in Beef, Marissa Anderson in Companion Animal, and Grace Harville in Dairy Foods/Foods Nutrition Project.

All three students had a lot to say about their experiences at Academic Conference. They each had the opportunity to work in the lab and out in the field alongside University of Tennessee professors and specialist in multiple project sessions. Each project session focuses on giving our youth a better understanding of their project and exploring possible career goals.

All Academic Conference delegates were treated to a free day at Dollywood. Delegates also completed service projects at Beardsley Farm, The Ronald McDonald House, and multiple other locations. The week was wrapped up with a formal recognition banquet and a closing dance.

Junior 4-H Camp

Forty-three very excited 4-H’ers departed from Smith County on June 22 to attend Junior Camp at the Clyde M. York 4-H Center in Crossville. Assisting with camp activities during the week were teen leaders Lindsey Payne, McKayla Kirk, Skylar Hart, and Jacob Summers, along with adult leaders Rachel Dunn and Stephen Bare. 4-H Agent Trent Jones also attended as Co-Director for the week.

Junior 4-H Camp is for youth who have completed grades 4-6. Activities included swimming, shooting sports, group sports, fishing, kayaking/canoeing, nature hikes, leather craft and woodworking, T-shirt airbrushing, skits, music, and more. Campers also had a lot of fun with the land and Water Olympics and campfires with the story of “Herman the German.” Thanks to each of the campers for their good behavior during the week and to our volunteers for their assistance.

43 Smith County 4-H’ers and 6 adult and teen leaders enjoyed their week at Junior 4-H Camp at Clyde M. York 4-H Center in Crossville.
4-H Livestock Show

Every year, Smith County 4-H members excel on the show circuit with their 4-H livestock project animals. The summer starts off as they begin to select their show animals, get them registered for shows through our office, and start breaking and training their animals for the upcoming shows.

The Smith County 4-H Livestock Show was held on June 18 with 20 head of goats and beef heifers exhibited by 6 4-H’ers. The exhibitors displayed great sportsmanship and did a wonderful job with their animals. Thanks to all the exhibitors, volunteers, and sponsors who made the show a success.

![Participants in the 2015 Smith County 4-H Livestock Show were left to right – Hallie Dillard, Austin Bridgewater, Jessica Bridgewater, Lenore Thorne, McKenzie Barrett, Violet Thorne.](image)

Agriculture and Natural Resources

**County Standard Test**

Each spring, counties in West and lower Middle Tennessee plant test plots of corn and soybeans as part of the University of Tennessee County Standard Test program. These plots are sprayed, fertilized, and harvested with the equipment used in the cooperating producer’s farming operation. The yield results are then published each fall to be used by producers across Tennessee in deciding which varieties to plant in their area.

This year, northern middle Tennessee will be represented in the tests as 29 different varieties of corn were planted at George McDonald’s farm in Dixon Springs in late April. This fall, each variety will be harvested and weighed to determine which varieties yield superior results. This information will be helpful to row crop producers not only in our area, but across Tennessee. We will also be partnering with the UT Extension office in Trousdale County to plant soybean test plots in July.

![Corn variety tests being planted this past April](image)

**Beef Quality Assurance Classes Held**

Multiple Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) trainings have been held this spring and summer in Smith County. The purpose of the class is to ensure that beef cattle are managed in a manner that will result in safe and wholesome beef and milk products for consumers. Specifically, BQA is designed to enhance carcass quality by preventing drug residues, injection-site blemishes, and bruises.

To date, over 250 Smith County producers have been certified as BQA producers, including 52 so far this year. The program will enable them to enhance their product, maximize marketability, and strengthen consumer confidence. Participating in the training also allows producers to be eligible for the TN Department of Agriculture’s Agriculture Enhancement Program.