

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Get Your 4-H Camper Ready for Adventure

By: Sharayha Clingenpeel, Extension Agent for 4-H Youth Development

Daviess County 4-H will attend 4-H Camp at West KY 4-H Camp in Dawson Springs, KY, June 10-13, 2025. In 2024, Daviess County 4-H hit a record high with 83 youth and 13 adults in attendance! Youth spend four days and three nights making friends, trying new things, and exploring the world around them, technology-free. A typical day at camp starts with breakfast, followed by four classes, lunch, free recreation and swim time, dinner, evening program with the entire camp, snack, line dancing, or alternative activity with reflections and cabin time rounding out the night. Every day is jampacked with opportunities for youth to learn and grow!

Youth choose four classes to take between breakfast and lunch. They will take the same four daily, building upon what they learned the previous day. Some camp classes include archery, zip line, nature, swimming, canoeing, riflery, arts and crafts, rock and read, coloring/drawing, paparazzi (photography and stop-motion videos), and many more options. The cost for camp this year is \$225. This includes the registration fee, transportation, and a t-shirt. Scholarship opportunities are available. 4-H camp applications can be picked up at the Daviess County Extension Office located at 4800A New Hartford Road, or you can call 270-685-8480 to have one mailed to you. The deadline to sign up is May 7th.

Here are nine exercises to try at home to help youth prepare for 4-H or any overnight camp!

4-H Camp is an exciting opportunity for youth, but a group living environment with high independence can also be stressful. Basic tasks like managing one's belongings and navigating the campgrounds can be a big adjustment. Parents and caregivers can make sure their future campers are physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared for their upcoming 4-H adventure with these nine helpful exercises:

- 1. Pack a suitcase with your child a few days before camp.** Packing clothes in Ziploc bags with day labels can help your child stay organized; dirty clothes can then be repacked in the empty bags.
- 2. Practice stocking a daypack.** Help your child pack their backpack with items they'll need for a typical camp day, including a towel, a Ziploc bag for a wet swimsuit, sunscreen, water bottle, hat, and sunglasses. At camp, counselors will also help campers review the schedule and remind them to double-check their belongings before moving between activities.
- 3. Test-drive a shower caddy for toting toiletries.** To manage camp toiletries, use a small backpack for dry items and a caddy or waterproof bag for wet items. Practice using a caddy at home for bathing, brushing teeth, getting ready for the day, and going to bed.

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

4. Help your child keep track of shower time. Camp shower lines can be long. Practice five-minute showers before camp. The showers at camp are private, but modest children can always shower in bathing suits.

5. Prepare to "pitch in" to keep the camp clean. To get into the routine, encourage your youth to sweep, wipe the kitchen table after meals, and make the bed daily.

6. Get comfortable with tracking time and monitoring surroundings. Camp gets busy! While exploring the campgrounds on the first day, note landmarks. To familiarize your child with the camp layout, look up your campground map on the 4-H website. Before camp, take family walks to prepare your child for hiking.

7. Encourage your child to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. To determine how many ounces your child should drink daily, divide your child's body weight by two. Start using a camp water bottle in the weeks before camp to track water intake.

8. Learn how to air-dry wet items. No one likes moldy clothes! Teach your child to use a clothesline and space items out to dry in the sun.

9. Teach your child how to take a break. Discuss ways your child can find quiet time in a busy environment and how to recognize when a break is needed. Your camper can ask a counselor for quiet time. Talk about managing emotions, too. Give your child a scenario and discuss what to do if problems arise.

Above all, remind your youth that it's normal to feel overwhelmed in a new environment and that it is okay to ask for help. Our staff and volunteers want every child to thrive at camp and are committed to supporting your camper.

The Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is an Equal Opportunity Organization with respect to education and employment and authorization to provide research, education information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, physical or mental disability or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.