

Ithaca - 5/8/2017

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2017 Animal Crackers: Horse Diggety Dog!



Held on Saturday, May 6th, the 27th annual educational spring outreach event, affectionately known as “Animal Crackers” hosted by the Department of Animal Science, filled Morrison Hall with over 200 participants travelling from nearly 34 different counties in New York State. The workshop series was once again organized by a planning committee of campus and county based Cooperative Extension 4-H Educators in cooperation with Department of Animal Science staff and was designed to encourage youth to engage in science themes related to animals.

From animal behavior, nutrition and disease prevention to grooming and safe handling topics, Animal Crackers introduced new 4-H project members to best management practices for raising healthy animals. Dogs and horses not only provide companionship, they have important jobs that contribute to society and impact the economic viability of our state. This year, with the help of nearly 40 volunteers, 12 different workshop experiences were offered to 4-H’ers who had an interest in dogs and horses. Guests were treated to opening remarks by Alexa Maille, <https://nys4-h.org/state-staff/>, NYS 4-H Youth Development STEM specialist, who welcomed participants to campus and reminded the audience of the many year ‘round opportunities the New York State 4-H youth development program has to offer. Additional experts in their field, such as Dr. Jeffery LaPoint, DVM, shared science concepts with young people by instilling inquisitiveness and reinforcing responsible animal caretaking skills.



At the end of the day, four experienced teens, Morgan Cotter and Kav Young of Madison, Nicole Ferrara of Seneca, and Allyson Wentworth of Monroe, all encouraged youth to take advantage of opportunities wherever they exist. All credited 4-H to where they are today, in college, preparing for their future career or next opportunity to visit such places as New York’s state capital in Albany. Their speaking poise and passion showed evidence of the skills they had learned along the way, in biology, communication and leadership.

The primary objectives of the 4-H youth animal science program are to: 1) Increase understanding of and engage youth in critical thinking about animal biology concepts, 2) Increase understanding of safe, ethical, responsible and sustainable ways to raise and manage domestic animals, and 3) Increase career awareness and access to educational opportunities needed to prepare for animal related careers in adulthood.

For more than a quarter century, Animal Crackers has been credited by 4-H’ers as their very first step onto a college campus which provided motivation and encouragement to continue exploring opportunities to learn more. Many thanks go out to all the volunteers from Cornell University, Cooperative Extension, Cornell’s College of Veterinary Medicine and the community at large. In addition, the 2017 event would not have been possible without the generous support of sponsors including the NYS 4-H Foundation Willman Fund, and Ithaca Wegman’s Nabisco distributor, who provided iconic cracker treats for all. To learn more about future opportunities to connect kids to Cornell, visit Cornell Cooperative Extension’s 4-H Youth Development website <https://nys4-h.org/> or Cornell’s Department of Animal Science 4-H Youth Extension website <http://4h.ansci.cornell.edu/>