

OCONEE 4-H HISTORY

Placed in the meeting room of the Oconee County Extension Office are three scrapbooks of Oconee 4-H that tell a story of past and present 4-H'ers. Through the years Oconee 4-H has carved its reputation as a very prestigious organization. The scrapbooks show the 4-H'ers dating back to the early 1970's. Even then Oconee 4-H was receiving first place awards and Master 4-Her titles.

Dr. Wilson White was the coach of the Land Judging team for a number of years. His teams won the state level competitions numerous times and traveled to Oklahoma for the national contest seven times. Diana Beckett, a 4-Her on one of Dr. White's champion teams, said when asked about the national contest, "I enjoyed the opportunity to meet lots of kids, visit someplace I had never been before, and compete in an event I liked and felt confident in."

Another team that has greatly excelled over the years is the Dairy Judging and Dairy Quiz Bowl teams. Frank Stancil coached the team in years past and more recently volunteer Diane Wiley and Extension Agent Rachel Guthrie coached the Dairy Teams. For 24 years Henry Hibbs coached the Dairy teams with many wins and is taking both a Dairy Judging and Dairy Quiz Bowl team to the national contest this year.

Former 4-Her, Mary Mills said, "I have lots of great memories of the wonderful opportunities that we had through 4-H. Oconee County is fortunate in that the excellent agents and leaders have brought and continue to bring stability and enthusiasm to the 4-H program here." Some other activities Oconee 4-H'ers have participated in and excelled in over the years are: Consumer Judging, District Project Achievement, State Congress, Horse Quiz Bowl, Livestock Judging, Forestry and Horse Judging. Many former 4-Hers can recall their successes and 4-H stories as some of their most cherished memories.

John Brannen, a former 4-H agent for Oconee, guided the 4-Hers of his time in 4-H events, making them state winners multiple times. Dr. Brannen always said, "These 4-H'ers are our most valuable resource – and a source of true encouragement." If you have a chance, stop by and take a look through these scrapbooks and see how 4-H has truly shaped Oconee County.

Brooks Saye is a sophomore at Oconee County High School