Missouri 4-H youth delegates gathered at the State Capitol for the 13th annual University of Missouri Extension 4-H Legislative Academy, February 20-22. Fifteen 4-H members from across the state shared their 4-H stories and experiences with legislators, commodity groups, and state agency leaders over three days.

The Academy was hosted in the Missouri State Capitol by Sen. Brian Munzlinger and Rep. Tom Hurst, who introduced group members on the floor of the Missouri Senate and House sessions on the first afternoon.

Marty Oetting and Courtney Kawelaske, University of Missouri government relations, oriented the group to the Missouri General Assembly. Delegates convened with legislators, sponsors and special guests over dinner in the Capitol that evening. Rep. Mike Kelley led Academy members on a knowledgeable and enthusiastic evening tour of the Missouri State Capitol.

Dr. Tony Simones, Manager of Judicial Education at the State Courts Administrator’s Office, guided delegates on day two in learning about the role of justices in first amendment court cases. The group toured the Missouri Supreme Court and met with Justice Mary Rhodes Russell to gain perspective on the justice system and Missouri’s highest court.

4-H delegates experienced life as a lawmaker, shadowing State Senators and Representatives in their offices, committee hearings, and floor sessions on the second afternoon.

Group members dined and spoke before a crowd of legislators, leaders, and guests that evening at the formal MO-AG banquet sponsored by MO-AG’s Jim Russell Foundation and the Missouri 4-H Foundation. They also witnessed the Peter Myers Distinguished Service Award presented to long-time leaders Bob & Andy Jackson, Anson Elliot, and Bob & Georgia Richter.

Delegates wrapped up the Academy in day three meetings with Missouri Department of Agriculture and Missouri Department of Conservation officials, and visits to the offices of Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft, Attorney General Josh Hawley, Lieutenant Governor Mike Parson, and Governor Eric Greitens.
The top 3 things youth delegates said they took away from the Academy experience:

1. Relationships/Networking
2. Knowledge/Understanding of Government
3. Confidence/Personal Growth

100% said the experience connected them to their future education and/or career plans. 93% said they are “more likely” to pursue a role in public leadership and service:

- “After this trip, I am now considering a career within the government.”
- “I saw that people with my projected career path have a wide range of opportunities.”
- “It gave me more/better skills in networking and it’s made me rethink my future/career plans.”
- “I would like to be a lawyer and visiting the Missouri Supreme Court was very enlightening.”

4-H youth citizenship skills (1 = very low, 5 = very high):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting 4-H to partners and stakeholders</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating effectively with state legislators</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding my role as a citizen of Missouri</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining to others how Missouri state government works</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making decisions about my future education/career</td>
<td>4.87</td>
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</tbody>
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Missouri 4-H is a community of nearly 230,000 youth ages 5-18 from rural farming communities, suburban schoolyards, and urban neighborhoods. 4-H youth are learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills, guided by more than 9,100 caring adult volunteers statewide. University of Missouri Extension 4-H is the youth development program of the nation’s Cooperative Extension System.

(Photos courtesy of Missouri General Assembly, MU Extension, and University of Missouri Extension 4-H Center for Youth Development)

University of Missouri, Lincoln University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Local Extension Councils Cooperating

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/ADA INSTITUTIONS