

Conference builds leadership skills

By Corrin Dixon and Bo Henderson

The goal of building better leaders brought 46 students from across Mississippi to the 2017 4-H Cooperative Business Leadership Conference, held at Mississippi State University July 17-20.

The event, organized by Laura Greenhaw, MSU Extension Service specialist, combined a variety of events to cultivate leadership skills. Students formed their own soft drink cooperative, conducted a service project, participated in workshops and toured business cooperatives.

“My favorite part was the workshops because I met new individuals and learned new things about myself I never learned before,” said Quin Rawls from Hancock County.

4-H is about helping others, so the 4-H entertained the elderly at the

Claiborne at Adelaide by bringing in miniature horses for them to enjoy. The young people learned business skills firsthand by forming a soft drink cooperative, electing their own members to serve in the business positions.

Their tour took them to an electric power association in Mayhew, a grain terminal in Greenville and a cotton gin in Greenwood.

“I really enjoyed seeing the line-men demonstrate to us the power of electricity at 4-County,” said Logan Carr from Forrest County. “It was amazingly powerful.”

Students qualified to attend the event in various ways. Some were members of the Leadership Team, some were Council Members, and others were team winners and high-scoring individuals at Club Congress.



Classroom instruction is important, but hands-on experience is better. 4-H'ers formed their own cooperative to sell soft drinks and snacks.

Soft drink cooperative grew members' investment

By Precious Thompson and Hannah Dean

That dollar in your wallet: we know how to make it grow. This week the 4-H'ers met a need for drinks and snacks by forming a cooperative to get the job done.

The Coca Cola Cooperative was a project this year at the 2017 4-H Cooperative Business Leadership Conference at Mississippi State University. The cooperative offered several types of drinks and chips that were available for sale throughout the day at each activity that was a part of the leadership conference.

The cooperative began July 17 and ended July 20. The business venture allowed the young people to take a leadership role by being a part of the board of directors, or being selected as a manager, accountant or consumer representative.

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The conference exposed 4-H'ers to a variety of speakers, businesses and experiences to aid their personal development as leaders. Stapleco in Greenwood was a tour stop.

4-H'ers 'learn by seeing' on Mississippi bus tour of co-ops

By Shae Philips and John Mark Huff

At 6:53 a.m. on a sunny Wednesday morning, the co-op delegates were groggy and grouchy and did not want to go out on a tour.

Their opinions soon changed.

The students visited three business cooperatives in north Mississippi on July 19. When traveling to each co-op, they spent their time sleeping, rocking out to music and playing group games.

Jon Turner from 4-County Electric Power Association welcomed the group at their first stop in Mayhew.

"We are very proud of what we do. We have been in the business for 80 years," Turner said. "We supply electricity to homes in nine different counties."

At this tour stop, delegates enjoyed breakfast and viewed an awe-inspiring demonstration of high-voltage electricity.

Next stop was Farmers Grain Terminal in Greenville, where Will Weathers greeted delegates.

Weathers said the grain terminal started in 1968 acting as the middleman for farmers wishing to get a good price for their grain. While acting as a private company, it is a co-op and gives any profit that it makes back to the farmers.

The delegates made a last stop at Staplcoth in Greenwood. Founded in 1921, Staplcoth is one of the largest

and oldest cotton cooperatives in the country.

Delegates enjoyed snacks and drinks and viewed a video that explained how cotton is sorted into different grades.

Afterward, Jaykanze Bryant of Noxubee County was ready to return to campus.

"I've been laughing a lot," Bryant said. "It's been so fun, but I'm going to sleep on the ride back."



The Farmers Grain Terminal in Greenville was one stop on the daylong tour of different business cooperatives in Mississippi.



4-H'ers serve others, a belief they put into practice by entertaining elderly residents of the Claiborne at Adelaide with miniature horses.



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Board member Jonah Holland explained what he said is the main purpose of the Coca Cola Cooperative.

It "brings us together so we can learn and gain experience on cooperatives," Holland said.

4-H'ers participated in the cooperative by purchasing an ownership share at the beginning of the week. On Thursday, the profits were distributed equally among all the participants. That means members received back their initial investment plus an equal share of the profit made from the sale of snacks.

The cooperative taught responsibility, as different individuals had to keep up with the money and the merchandise. These directors also had to hire the people responsible for operating the business. 🍀