

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast, so this year happened to be our family's very first year participating in our local four H club and even though I did four H as a child and absolutely loved it, I feel like there was a pretty steep learning curve as I learned how to navigate it as a mom this time around. So if you have four H in your future or you're just curious about how it works, here are my top five takeaways. After our first year in four H, I'm your host Jill winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel a little disenchanted with modern life. I'll show you how to create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills.
- Speaker 1: [01:04](#) When I was in high school and I'd say a little before that as well, four H was my life. Now I'm assuming most everyone listening to this right now is somewhat familiar with four H but in case you are not basically four H is a club that's nationwide. There's generally local versions of it. Almost everywhere you go. And it's really a project based venture for kids and you can do all sorts of things in four H, everything from cooking to sewing to rocket building. And then of course, really one of the most popular four H projects happen to be animals or livestock. So if you've ever attended a County fair, you know, that's kind of one of the highlights at least for fairs around here. The livestock barns and the livestock sale. So I started 4-H when I was nine years old, took a little break and then picked it back up when I was 14 when I got my first horse.
- Speaker 1: [02:08](#) Being the strange child that I was, horse four H was literally my ultimate in life. Like I couldn't imagine anything better. I remember before I got my horse, we would drive by the fairgrounds and I would see the other kids out there riding for four H practice. And I was just so jealous I couldn't stand it. I just wanted to be doing that more than anything. So when I got that horse, four H was the very next step and it really was transformative for me. I did horse four H I did dog, I was a junior leader. I was the president of our club. I participated in public speaking contests and horse judging contests even up into the national level. And it was really good for me. It built my confidence. It definitely increased my knowledge in the horse world. I got really, really comfortable with volunteering and I started to see the benefit of giving back to the community, helped me get comfortable public speaking.
- Speaker 1: [03:15](#) And so it really was one of the highlights of my high school years. So I knew as soon as I had kids that we definitely would have 4-H as a part of our life. I wanted them to experience all the community service and the volunteering and the leadership

skills that are developed throughout the program. Now the problem is a kid has to be eight years old in order to start a standard for each project. So I remember when Mesa was little, I felt like it was going to be an eternity before we finally got to start for age. Now, lo and behold though, the years went by quickly and this year she finally was old enough. So it took us a little bit of time to decide what projects she would do. She kind of went back and forth for a while. Ultimately she settled on doing horse four H and that's mainly because that's in my wheelhouse.

Speaker 1: [04:15](#) We already have horses, we already have the stuff and the trailer. So it felt like a pretty easy step into, uh, without having to spend a lot of time or money or money figuring out how to do it. And then she also decided on market goat and that on the other hand, was not an easy choice just because we have never done market goats before. We had no idea what we were doing. So we went back and forth between sheep and goat for quite a while and ultimately landed on the goats because according to what we were hearing from a lot of experienced four H parents, goats are a little easier to handle in the show ring because you get to show them what a halter or a collar. And so we thought for her first year she's going to be a little nervous, a little unsure.

Speaker 1: [05:09](#) Having that extra bit of handling on the goat in the pin might be a little bit easier. So goat, it was, we got our goat from a local friend in April and very quickly started learning all the ins and outs of market goat showing at the time of the recording of this podcast. Our County fair has been wrapped up for about two weeks and I'm kind of reflecting back on our first year at fair because I never did fair as a kid. I did horses but not livestock. So fair was a completely new experience for me, both as a participant and a mom. So we had lots of learning curves and there was definitely some things I wish I would have known before we started. So I put together my top five takeaways and that's what I want to share with you right now.

Speaker 1: [06:03](#) Okay. Number one, if you are a first time four H parents, there's a lot of information and especially when you register, they're going to give you calendars and lists and dates and deadlines. Make sure you start paying attention to those right away and putting them on your calendar because they will sneak up on you faster than you think. For example, with all of the livestock projects, there's usually an ownership deadline and there is a way in for us, there's one way in and if you miss it, it's kind of a big deal. So I made sure to put that on my calendar and if I hadn't, I guarantee you I would've forgot. We ended up

subscribing to our local extension offices email newsletter, which really became my lifeline in navigating all of the dates and deadlines that I needed to keep track of. Now your local extension office or your local four H club, we'll probably run things a little differently.

Speaker 1: [07:08](#) Maybe they have a Facebook group or a Facebook page or a paper newsletter, but I just advise you to pay attention to all of the details because I found that sometimes the more experienced for each family's like they're so used to it, it doesn't even occur to them to maybe let you know that this is a big deal or this is important just because they're so used to it. So, it was really important that I be completely responsible for paying attention to all the dates. And that saved us more than once. Number two, if you're new into four H, especially if you're starting a project that's out of your comfort zone, like goats were to us, reach outside of just your club. Now clubs vary. Sometimes you have a very specific club for a specific project for, for example, sometimes, there's horse clubs that are really just about the horse project, whereas other times you have more general clubs.

Speaker 1: [08:12](#) So we have a small town club. It encompasses all the projects. We happen to be the only horse family in that club. So in order to get the support or maybe the learning experiences, we had to really search outside just our general club activities, which was totally fine because it gave us a chance to meet new people, um, go to some cool events. But if we had just stayed within that club, I think we would have been a little bit more limited. The good news is there's usually a lot of resources to help you get started with four H, whether it's other experienced families, other, you know, friends for us, the folks that we got our goat from were very, very willing to help us learn the ropes. And they showed us how to clip and they helped Mesa learn how to show it. And that was amazing.

Speaker 1: [09:09](#) So check with your breeder if you're doing a livestock project, see if they can give you some pointers. Um, reach out to other families in your community who have been doing those particular projects for a long time and really lean on them. I know we did that this year and it truly made all the difference. Number three, if you are in livestock or an animal project specifically, and this will probably apply to any project, but especially livestock, I highly recommend planning to attend a clinic or a workshop ahead of time. So kind of at the last minute in June I caught wind of a goat showmanship clinic and I decided, Hey, we'll be in town, let's go and Holy moly, I am so glad we did because we got there and I realized we didn't have

any of the stuff, any of the stands or the Clippers or the right show color and I was so thankful that we got to have that learning experience and figure out what we needed then versus rolling into the actual County fair show day and realizing that we're missing everything at that point.

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So that clinic was great for us this year. And usually depending on your area, you're going to have a lot of different options as far as clinics or workshops. Sometimes you'll have clinics that aren't even necessarily sponsored by four H but they're still really, really applicable to a four H kid. So do what you can to seek those out because I was so thankful we had that experience before we got to County fair. Otherwise we would have been in major shock and it would have been super stressful. Okay. Number four, this is a little bit more of a practical one. Before you get to fair, go buy some thank you supplies. This one totally caught me off guard and fair week is nuts. You're basically living at the fairgrounds. It's all about the shows and the sale and the classes and it's just really crazy. But you'll want to have a big piece of poster board or some sort of a supply with you to make a thank you poster right after the sale.

Speaker 1: [11:38](#)

Now, I suppose this isn't absolutely necessary, but what we realized is that a lot of kids, which I think this is brilliant, after the sale and after the business or local individual purchased their animals, the kids would have poster with a big thank you to blank and tape it up to their stall immediately because really the a huge part of four H is the community sponsorship and involvement and we want to do everything we can to show local businesses they're appreciated for sponsoring kids. So having that poster board up was super smart. I did not have that prepared ahead of time. So we ended up having to drive into town and get supplies and then put the poster together in our goat stall, which was not easy. We got it done. But next year I'm going to have poster board and markers and stickers with us, pack them right at the beginning of fair week and maybe even have Mesa start to decorate her poster ahead of time and just leave a blank to fill in the business name.

Speaker 1: [12:44](#)

So we have it ready to go. And there's no scrambling trying to find art supplies in the middle of fair chaos. That's just a little thing, but I think it's important for these, for you if you are a first time fair parent. All right. Lastly, number five. My biggest takeaway, I think this year was that is just as much about us learning as the parents and getting out of our comfort zones as it is our kid. So yes, four H is about the kids and the kids do the work and the kids are responsible for it and it's not at the parents project, but I realized that more than once throughout

this process of getting the goats and figuring out how to do it and what we needed and helping Mason navigate this new world, I was dealing with my own nervousness about getting out of comfort zones as well.

Speaker 1: [13:45](#) You know, I like to be the expert. We all do. It's more fun to be the person who knows what they're doing, who can walk into somewhere and nowhere to go and know who to talk to and be savvy about the situation. And when we get in these new worlds where we don't know what Clippers to buy, we don't know how to set the goat up, we don't know where to check in for fair registration. It can be a little disorienting. And so I really was reminding myself throughout the process that Mesa was watching me be uncomfortable and I wanted to show her that it's not something to be scared of when we are out of our comfort zone. It's something we plow through, we learn, we grow, and that's the only way we're ever going to get better. So I really wanted her to see that as much as I did her to for her to see, you know, how to clip a goat, right?

Speaker 1: [14:41](#) It's about learning new things and learning how to learn new things because a lot of us get stuck in our little comfort and we never push into that new phase of growth. So four H believe it or not, helped me grow this year. I think just as much as it did Mesa. So all in all, this past year, our first year in four H was a fabulous experience. Nice. Is already planning out her next year's projects. She's kind of indecisive at this point, going between dairy goats and a steer and horse, so who knows where she'll land. But if you have four H in your area, I highly recommend it. Even if you can't do livestock and you just do one of the static projects or cooking or dog four H or cat four H, it's kind of that old fashioned sort of program and it just feels special in our day and age and I think it's just a fabulous program for kids to be involved in.

Speaker 1: [15:50](#) All right, my friend. So if homesteading is something that you have been contemplating but you're just not sure how or where to start, I have got you covered. I just so happened to have an entire library of resources that is completely complimentary for homesteaders like you. You can get access right away [theprairiehomestead.com/grow](http://theprairiehomestead.com/grow) that's theprairiehomestead.com/grow and that is it for this episode. Thank you so much for listening and if you have a minute, I would be so honored if you could go over to iTunes and leave a quick review. If you enjoyed today's podcast, that's all for today, but I'll see you next time on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.

