

4-H members take Sacramento by storm

By SHANNA M. ABATTI, Special to this Newspaper | Posted: Thursday, July 7, 2016 12:10 am

Eighteen Imperial County 4-H members took Sacramento by storm the last week of June for the 4-H California Focus Citizenship Conference. During this jam-packed five day event, 4-H delegates participated in political campaigns, elected constitutional officers, created legislation, toured the State Capitol and the 3rd Court of Appeal. The 4-H officers, which paralleled California elected positions of governor, secretary of state, attorney general, etc., were sworn in to office at the California Court of Appeals. 4-H is the only youth program allowed to tour appellate court.

Youth delegates along with chaperones also had the opportunity to network with 4-H alumni at a special alumni dinner and etiquette skill development workshop. This year the focus was on #TrueLeaders as well as focusing on strengthening the youth adult partnership within and outside the 4-H program. Youths from Imperial County connected with alumni who not only want to support our local programming efforts but may turn into internship and scholarship opportunities for these youths.

Delegates observed the Assembly and Senate floors in action, as well as met with Sen. Ben Hueso, who discussed the Salton Sea, the importance of taking an active role in your community and how strong an impact 4-H makes in developing life skills such as leadership, citizenship and responsibility.

California Focus is a unique citizenship educational experience that combines hands-on participation workshops, debates and simulations with outstanding speakers and historical, cultural and government sites. California's capital city, Sacramento, becomes a "living classroom" for this five-day adventure. Delegates participated in activities designed to encourage them to become active in current issues and affairs. Imperial County had the largest delegation state wide in attendance at this working youth conference.



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Courtesy Photo

California Focus was the beginning of a life of public participation that left these students with a strong determination to become involved in their community. A key part of the prestigious program is the opportunity for the Imperial County team to develop, implement and evaluate a citizenship project within Imperial County. Our team has selected to focus on a "Think Kind Campaign." Team members are now creating their plan of action for the Imperial County, organizing an educational program and focusing their efforts at local elementary schools.

They will be bringing awareness to third- and fourth-graders about the negative and lasting effects that bullying has on each other. They hope to gain community support in delivering there Plan of Action.

The opportunity to attend this working conference and be involved in citizenship programs like the "4-H Think Kind" campaign is open to all youths 5-19 in Imperial County. (Some conferences have minimum age limits) If your school would like to start a 4-H citizenship club or send youth delegates to this conference next year please contact Shanna Abatti at The UCCE-Imperial County 4-H Youth Development Office, 760-352-9474 or smabatti@ucanr.edu. There are plenty of ways to get active and get involved!