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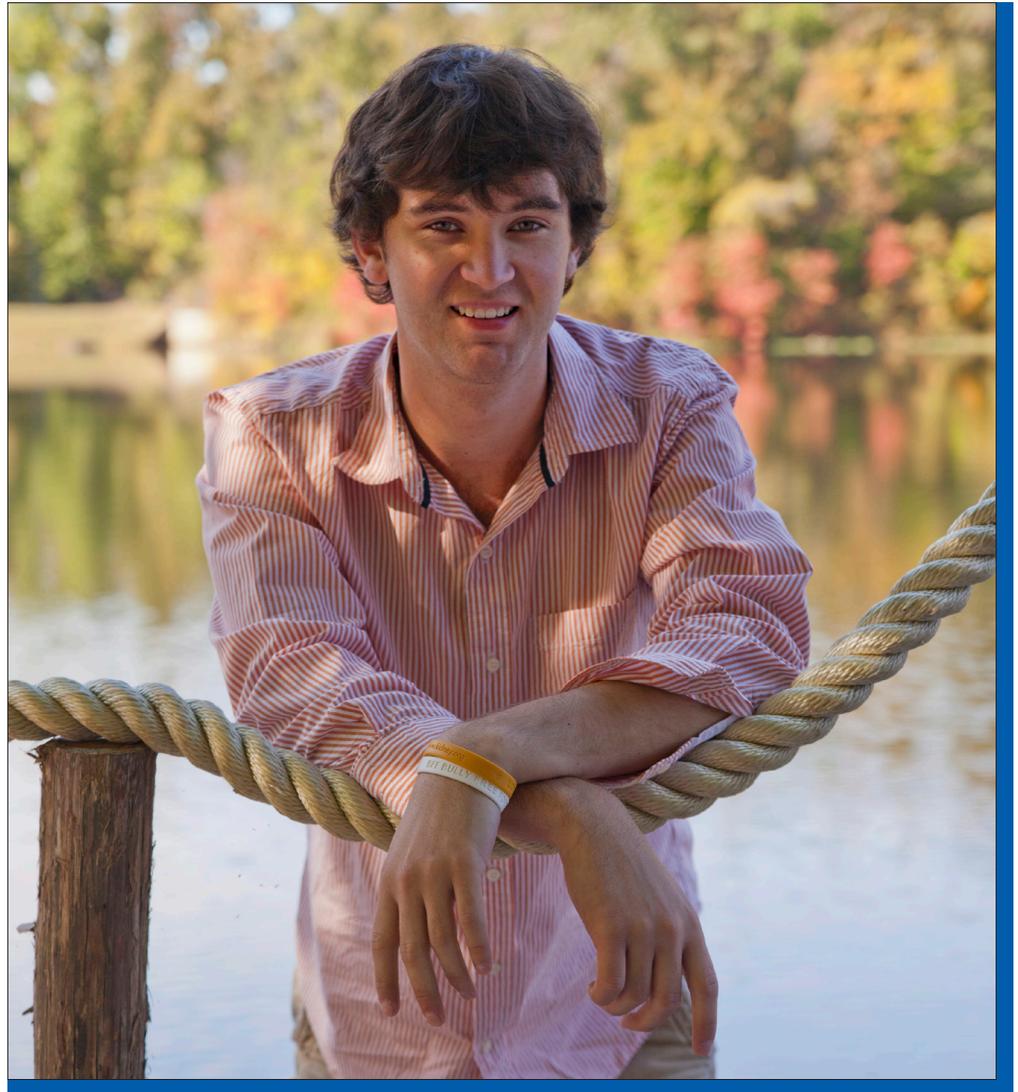
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment

When you support 4-H Youth Development, members develop teamwork and strive to improve their communities by identifying and addressing community issues, such as child hunger, which results in children being more prepared to learn.



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EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Changing Lives*



Conner Cooper received the Emerald Award, the highest National 4-H honor.

Muhlenberg County 4-H member, Conner Cooper, Recognized for Efforts to Reduce Child Hunger

Conner Cooper enlisted 4-H members and local businesses to create an annual community event that sustains the Backpack Program, providing food for at-risk students when school is not in session.



Conner Cooper worked to address child hunger in his community. **59% of school age youth in Muhlenberg County receive free or reduced priced school meals.** For many, school meals are the only food they may be able to access. Muhlenberg 4-H organized a Backpack Program, distributing backpacks with nutritious food on Fridays so children have food over the weekend. With **490 youth** identified to participate in the program and an estimated cost of **\$100 per child per year;** Connor approached local businesses, corporate offices, and civic groups to seek grant funding and organized a Polar Plunge event. Conner and 4-H members were able to exceed their goal to fund the backpack program. The Polar Plunge is now an annual event in Muhlenberg County. School administrators have shared that “low income children are better prepared to learn on Monday mornings thanks to the backpack program.”

Conner and 4-H members also work to reduce bullying and drug use in Muhlenberg County by performing skits at elementary schools and creating commercials that are aired at the local movie theater.

Conner’s leadership skills started in a 4th grade school 4-H club where he recruited friends to attend 4-H camp and conducted community service projects, such as a dog food drive for the local humane society. When a tornado and an ice storm devastated his community, Connor went door to door offering food and water and companionship for elderly neighbors.

Conner Cooper is an example of the outstanding youth leaders being developed through 4-H who identify community problems and take action to improve the quality of life for all members of the community. Conner was recognized by the **4-H Achievement Program**, for members from sixth grade through high school, as an **Emerald Award** winner, the highest honor for 4-H members. Youth are recognized and awarded points for participating in activities and events, completing projects and serving in leadership roles.



The Polar Plunge has become an annual fundraiser to support the Backpack Program, reducing the incidence of child hunger in Muhlenberg County.

Teens who participate in 4-H leadership programs become aware of community issues and develop critical thinking skills. They convey awareness of community needs and engage in civic activities to address the challenges.

-Tuft University Positive Youth Development Study



Connor participates in anti-bullying programs at local elementary schools. His character, Bones, shares how mean words can be more hurtful than other injuries and may never heal.