

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

University Extension

4-H helps small town kids become big time leaders

Even for good students with a solid academic background, the transition from a high school of 120 to college campus of 25,000 can be a cultural shock. But, when the background also includes years of leadership experience through 4-H and FFA, college life, even on a big campus, needn't be intimidating. Ask four close friends and recent graduates of tiny Orient-Macksburg High School in southwest Iowa.

Elder statesman of the group is Matt Rohrig, a 2002 O-M graduate, now a senior at Iowa State University. Rohrig's close friends Michael Cooley, Greg Lilly and Grant Nelson comprised approximately 10 percent of the O-M graduating class of 2004.

Like many youth from small town Iowa, all four participated in a host of extra curricular activities while in high school. But, where their interests most frequently coincided in the classroom was Vocational Agriculture. Outside of school it was 4-H.



Rohrig, Lilly, Cooley and Nelson take a break in front of the Parks Library on ISU campus.

All four served in leadership roles thru FFA.

Each was a member of the Adair County 4-H Youth Council. All are currently students at ISU majoring in an ag-related field. And, during the 2006-2007 school year, each held a major leadership position on campus: Cooley, president of the Public Service and Administration in Agriculture Club; Nelson, president of the Agronomy Club; Rohrig, president of Block and Bridle and Lilly, vice-president of Collegiate 4-H.

Nelson was also a member of the Cyclone soil judging team that took first at Nationals this spring. Cooley was instrumental in helping start a nationally acclaimed program for young people called Operation Military Kids. Rohrig was recognized as Ag Man of the Year on the ISU campus this spring, and Lilly will be starting his third summer of internship on one of the University's outlying research farms in May.

Rohrig spoke for all when he said, "When I came to Iowa State I never thought I would be president of one of the largest, most active clubs on campus. I realize now that the opportunities I had at home through 4-H and FFA made a huge difference."

"Youth development and leadership skills have always been hallmarks of 4-H," said Deb Hall, Adair County Extension Education Director. "It's amazing what can be accomplished by kids who are both skilled and motivated. And, the best part is the short-term investment helping them develop those skills pays off for a lifetime."

For more information about this and other ISU Extension programs, contact Adair County Extension Education Director, Deb Hall at 641-743-8412, debhall@iastate.edu, or visit the Iowa State University Extension website at www.extension.iastate.edu.