

Leah Gann wants to bring the Head, Heart, Hands and Health to more young people in Columbus.

As an extension agent for 4-H in Lowndes County, Gann's mission is to develop the potential of young people and to provide "hands-on" (experiential) educational programs. From cooking to shooting sports to public speaking to environmental science and everything in between, Gann wants to help students ages 5 to 18 years old get involved in their community.

"Learning is and should always be fun," Gann said. "4-H is an opportunity to take learning outside of the classroom walls and into your community. If you want to have fun, learn by doing, develop skills that will last a lifetime and even receive a little recognition for work well done, I can help find the right program for you. Students can learn about hunting, fishing, STEM, kayaking, sewing, cooking and so many other areas."

4-H is Mississippi State University Extension Service's youth development program. It provides many diverse environments for youth to learn and to develop skills that will assist them in becoming well-rounded individuals in an encouraging environment that helps them reach their full potential. The youth program offers activities to instill confidence and independence, and it also provides a safe place for youth to be themselves and have fun learning valuable life skills. The program is offered in all 82 counties in the state.

4-H also is a partner with the United Way, so there is no cost to join. The first step to getting involved is reaching out to Gann at: leah.gann@msstate.edu. From there, students will need to register and gain more information about what projects they may be interested in, how to start a new club or how to participate on their own.

“I will gladly sit with the parents and point their children in the right direction,” Gann said. “However, I know many of my parents are busy, so I encourage anyone interested to reach me via phone or email first.”

Gann said 4-H is volunteer led and that there are “amazing” coaches who will work with students, specifically with shooting sports. She said it is somewhat up to the coaches / parents on how many times the students will meet to practice and get assistance in learning their discipline. Gann added that some of the student-volunteer interaction happens at the extension office at 485 Tom Rose Road in Columbus. All of the interactions will be held in Lowndes County.

“Ultimately, I want to see youth take charge of their interests and cultivate their creativity and leadership skills through 4-H,” Gann said.

Through the 4-H Ambassador Program, students age 15 and older have the opportunity to represent the state 4-H youth development program, which enhances leadership, communication and citizenship in their schools, city, county and state. Through 4-H, students can apply to earn a Congressional Award through earning service hours, assisting at 4-H events and serving in their community. You can learn more about the Congressional Award process by going to:

<https://www.congressionalaward.org/>

Gann is planning several other initiatives that will provide even more opportunities for the young people of Lowndes County. She doesn’t want anyone to wait to get involved, though, and is eager to help students expand their horizons.

“Don’t hesitate to reach out or to ask if we have a program that might interest you or if there is something you always have been curious about and want to try,” Gann said. “We’re here to help you realize your potential and help make the best better.”

For more information about 4-H Lowndes County, contact Gann at 662-328-2111.