

Let Your Song Soar



A community is defined as being a group of people living in a localized area. However, the 106 delegates who united at Olds College for the 68th Annual Alberta 4-H Club Week found their makeshift community to be much more than just a shared living space – they found it to be life-changing.

“I’ve been to a tonne of programs and this is the best one by far,” said an enthusiastic Jenalee Blackhurst, Club Week delegate and a member of the Gilby Beef and Bits and Spurs Equine Youth 4-H Club, “I have met so many amazing people, have learned so much and had an awesome time.”

Club Week participants occupied the Olds College campus between July 21- 26, 2009 for what many members would consider to be the highlight of their 4-H career. Deemed Alberta 4-H’s most substantive self development program for Senior Members, Club Week focuses on group discussions, awareness forums, team work session and of course, a ridiculous amount of fun as a means of aiding and complementing delegates’ personal growth.



Bookended by morning and evening reflection sessions, program participants started their days in the gym, using the Club Week song, Miley Cyrus’ “The Climb”, as the background music to their daily debriefs as they mulled over their day’s activities, conversations and discussions, and made projections for the day ahead.

“The designated reflection times are pinnacle to the member’s Club Week experience. There is so much being presented to the members, so many ideas being brought up and discussed,” said Kari Bergerud, Summer Program Assistant and Club Week Coordinator. “Many previously held notions are being challenged and re-evaluated in these discussions. Members need to have time to digest it all and make sense of it so that they are able to take what they have realized and begin to incorporate it into their day-to-day lives.”



Without so much as a beat skipped, delegates moved seamlessly from Morning Reflection to “News and Views”, an informal “news cast” of program events. This was followed by small group session time that ranged in topics from “Family” to “Pop Culture” to “Self Awareness” and Physical Activity blocks, which included volleyball, dance, weight room and an abs class. All of this before lunch time! Afternoons sped by with continued small group discussions and leisure activity time (yoga, croquet or craft time, anyone?).

Awareness forums proved to set days apart; delegates were moved, informed and affected by the talks and presentations delivered by a variety of inspirational individuals. “Overcoming Adversity” featured the stories of four exceptional people who, despite having encountered outstanding cases of misfortune, all refused to become victims of their misfortune. The wisdom imparted and the perspective given was invaluable, and was, no doubt, the topic of many conversations for days to follow.

The Human Rights session was one of great insight and humility. Speakers from the Central Alberta Refugee Effort (C.A.R.E.), which is an organization that works to support refugees and immigrants who have moved to central Alberta, shared their experiences with delegates about their lives prior to coming to Canada. Appreciation for Canadian rights and freedoms and encouraging members to remember to speak up for those who are without a voice of their own were the messages members took away from the presentations.



As a means of providing balance to the week’s programming, and in order to fulfill one of Alberta 4-H’s #1 objectives, Club Week also provided delegates with ample opportunity for fun! From mini-Olympics and a Wild West BBQ, to a Masquerade dance and a County Fair, to Fun Frolics and a talent show, Club Week-ers had the time of their life, reconnecting with old friends and establishing connections to new ones.

“This year’s Club Week was a success, not only in terms of the number of delegates in attendance and the amount of fun that was had, but also accounting for the program’s main objectives having been met,” reviewed Mark Shand, 4-H Programs Specialist and Club Week Program Director. “The programming at Club Week attempts to enhance members’ levels of self awareness, facilitate the groundwork for a positive outlook on life and instil in them the confidence needed to navigate life’s challenges and realize the goals that they have set for themselves.”

The warning “all good things come to an end” proved true for the Club Week community, with delegates leaving on Sunday afternoon after having rounded out their week with Saturday night’s banquet, Keynote Speaker presentation and a dance. An exhausting week indeed, but Club Week is also a time of great realization, immense growth and inevitable change.

Club Week is title sponsored by EnCana, and co-sponsored by Agrium, AMA Insurance, Government of Alberta and Monsanto. In-kind volunteer contributions were also made on behalf of AltaLink, ATB and UFA.