

**Title:** 4-H National Conference

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From April 17-24, 2024, I had an amazing experience at the 4-H National Conference in Washington, D.C. The opportunities I had during this trip were endless. From meeting new people from all over the world to speaking with government agencies about global problems, the experience I gained was something I will never forget. The opportunity for this trip was provided to me by Utah 4-H. Utah 4-H is a youth development program that focuses on developing teens into strong and resourceful people. Along with four other girls, I was selected for this trip through an application and interview process. When the committee chose the participants, they looked for teens who were not only smart but also knew how to work well with different kinds of people.

At this conference, we were tasked with solving a real-world problem given to us by a government agency. This trip required a lot of preparation. In the months leading up to the event, we had weekly meetings with our group and leaders to prepare and plan our travel. In addition to preparing with our state, we were also assigned a roundtable and a government agency. The agency tasked us with a problem, and we were responsible for solving it. Not only did we have expectations from the agencies, but our leaders also had expectations for us. The main expectation was to remember where we are from and honor it.

During this trip, we had many opportunities to learn. One of the highlights was speaking with Representative Burgess Owens. He was able to get us the opportunity to vote on the House floor. This was an incredible experience, and we learned so much from it. Another major highlight was meeting youth from all over the world and learning from them. All the girls from Utah returned home with many new friends, with whom they have kept in contact.

We learned many valuable skills on this trip. We not only learned how to research and present but also how to talk with people from different lifestyles. However, this trip did come with some challenges. Some of the challenges we faced included miscommunications, as everyone was learning. But in the end, we laughed about it and had an overall amazing experience. For the youth who go in the future, we recommend that you prepare, ask questions, and go into it with an open mind. Despite the challenges, we had a lot of fun. This trip was an experience of a lifetime. Everyone who went had such an amazing time and wouldn't change it for the world. The skills we learned will help us with our future plans, such as leading youth, going to college, and pursuing anything we desire.

I appreciate the opportunity that was given to me to go on this trip. One thing I have always remembered from 4-H is that it's best to learn by doing. Even though this trip seemed big and scary, just going, and learning while I was there was something I could have never dreamed of.