

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN  
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## RESOLUTION: MORE THAN JUST A GOAL

The New Year usually brings with it decisions to make this year better in one way or another. We come up with “New Year’s Resolutions” with determination to lose weight, get fit, or improve our lives in some way. Most of us begin a new year with a goal to do something. We set goals to live a healthier lifestyle, be more purposeful, spend more time with family and the list goes on and on.

But, have you ever stopped to really consider what a resolution is? Google the word, “resolution” and you will find: “noun; the state or quality of being resolute; firm determination”. “Resolve, a course of action determined or decided on”. Have you noticed something about these definitions? They don’t just involve setting a goal or expectation, they involve the path or some direction to meet that destination. They are firm, defined and absolute.

In order to achieve a goal or resolution, we must determine the steps it will take to achieve success. Begin the process by setting high, but achievable goals. Goals can be as simple or complex as you want them to be, but they should be achievable. Employers, family and others can set all kinds of goals for you in ignorance of your passions and capabilities. You have to gauge for yourself where your ambitions lie. Make your goal a challenge, though. This gives you a sense of accomplishment when you reach your upper limit.

Set a broad, overarching goal, then break it down into smaller, more specific goals. For example, if you want to save \$1200 by the end of the year, you will want to break this down into savings goals for each month. If weight loss is your goal, set a total amount and then break that amount down by months or weeks. Determine the steps needed to reach your goal and develop a plan. Give yourself a deadline and create a “to-do list”. Breaking goals down into shorter tasks keeps you on track and consistent.

Vocalize. Write your goals down. Tell others what you wish to attain. Verbalizing our goals, especially to friends and family helps us to be more accountable.

Consistency is the key. Hang a list of your ultimate goals where you see them on a regular basis and review your goals daily, if not, more often. Review your “to-do list” regularly and track your progress. Be disciplined in reviewing your goals and checking your progress.

A good rule of thumb for goal setting is to follow the “SMART” rule. SMART Goals are:  
S- Specific (or Significant)  
M- Measurable (or Meaningful)  
A- Attainable (or Action-oriented)  
R- Relevant (or Rewarding)  
T- Time bound (or Trackable)

4-H members learn to set goals each year as they determine which projects in which they want to enroll. Many members set a goal and then enroll in a project. For example, if a youth wants to learn about Kansas trees, they may enroll in the 4-H Forestry project and work one-on-one with our Forestry Project Leader to collect leaves and study trees. A 4-H member who is involved in theater, symphony, orchestra or some other liberal art may enroll in the Performing Arts 4-H Project with the intention of learning more about music composition. After determining their projects and learning more about their interests, kids can revise and update their goals to fit their needs.

4-H teaches youth about setting a goal, then following a path to success. This doesn't mean that the road is smooth and easy; but 4-H offers kids a unique opportunity for hands-on learning with a helpful, caring adult who will help them trouble shoot when things get bumpy.

For more information about Cowley County 4-H or Cowley County Extension Programs, contact the Cowley County Extension Office 221-5450, 441-4565.

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