Yoga curriculum helps 4-H’ers achieve optimal overall health

By Kay Lynn Johnson

Words such as leadership, dedication and responsibility have long been part of the vocabulary of Oklahoma 4-H’ers. Now, thanks to a new curriculum, terms such as plank, swaying tree, chill pose, half moon and down dog also will make their way into the vocabularies of 4-H members.

Cathy Allen, 4-H curriculum coordinator at the State 4-H Office at Oklahoma State University, said she is excited about the new Yoga for Kids curriculum.

“Yoga for Kids is another fun and educational way we can help our club members achieve optimal physical, emotional and social health,” Allen said. “Keeping in mind the four Hs of 4-H, including head, heart, hands and health, this new curriculum falls right in line with the fourth H. Healthy living is a core component of the 4-H Youth Development Program.”

Yoga for Kids in Oklahoma is funded through the Walmart Healthy Living Initiative grant. To date, more than 5,000 youth have been reached by the Healthy Living programs, which include Get Fit for Life, 4-H Food Showdown, Take a Stand and now Yoga for Kids.

“We had been focusing on nutritional and emotional well-being with our programs, so the new Yoga for Kids program is a fun, noncompetitive way to address the importance of physical health,” Allen said.

Two one-day trainings recently took place on the OSU campus in Stillwater and 49 Extension educators attended, including Kay Lynn Johnson, Murray County 4-H and FCS Educator.

“I’m really excited about this new curriculum and to have the opportunity to share it with the youth in Murray County,” Johnson said. “Yoga for Kids supports the goal of equipping youth and families to achieve optimal overall health.”
Many people have heard of yoga, but may not fully understand the positive impact it can have on those who participate.

“Yoga is a type of exercise that combines breath, physical postures or poses and mindfulness to help strengthen and calm the body and mind,” Allen said. “By practicing yoga, our youth will build strength, flexibility and confidence, all of which are great benefits for the mind and body.”

Johnson said the program is designed for all ages of 4-H’ers, including those just beginning in Cloverbuds, all the way up to the most seasoned club members.

“When some people think of yoga, images of people twisting themselves into knots may come to mind,” Johnson said. “However, this program is designed for all ages and abilities, from the flexible to the not-so-flexible. In fact, those with limited flexibility to begin with stand to benefit the most because their flexibility will improve with time and practice.”

Allen said she is getting positive feedback about the program and how various counties will be implementing the new curriculum. Johnson will begin implementing the program with Sulphur 4th graders in early April.

For more information about Yoga for Kids, please contact Kay Lynn Johnson 580-622-3016.

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