

Due to the nationwide Coronavirus outbreak, the Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference was canceled one week before it was scheduled to begin on March 19. Needless to say, this was a huge blow to members and advisors who had worked for months to earn the right to attend the event they look forward to all year. While they could not reschedule the event, our state leadership team was committed to providing as many members as possible the ability to at least compete in the projects in which they had invested so much time and energy.

Members have the opportunity to submit STAR (Students Taking Action with Recognition) events on-line between April 2 and April 22, with the exception of a few events that unfortunately do not lend themselves to an electronic format, like the culinary events. Students received revised instructions for how to submit their projects electronically through a combination of video and electronic documents. While this is not the scenario in which the students prepared, it does provide yet another unique learning experience for them.

Adaptability is often the key to success, and that has never been more true than right now as we all change our lives to shelter in place and keep ourselves and others as safe as possible. This on-line competition is just one creative example of how Montana FCCLA is adapting. When the projects have all been judged we will have a statewide virtual party to celebrate the competition winners as well as announce many other awards that are traditionally unveiled at the State Leadership Conference.

FCCLA is responding to this crisis at the local level as well. Many FCCLA members across the state are putting their sewing skills to use to make face masks to help prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Others are doing good deeds for their neighbors. Their instructors are utilizing a huge variety of creative ways to deliver classroom instruction on-line and/or through paper homework assignments. The responses vary across school districts and between teachers, but the constant theme is that we keep reaching out to our students. They are continuing to learn and grow, and our FCS instructors are there to support and guide and reassure them.

My students inspire me every day with the service projects they are doing and the heart with which they are facing disappointments like canceled graduations and State Leadership Conference. My fellow FCS teachers and FCCLA advisors inspire me as I see their creativity in delivering "hands-on" instruction long distance and putting in the extra hours to learn how to successfully submit on-line projects for the first time. And our state leadership in FCS and FCCLA inspire me with their knowledge and their support and their determination to serve staff and students with excellence.

I have never been prouder to be a member of the Montana FCS and FCCLA family.