

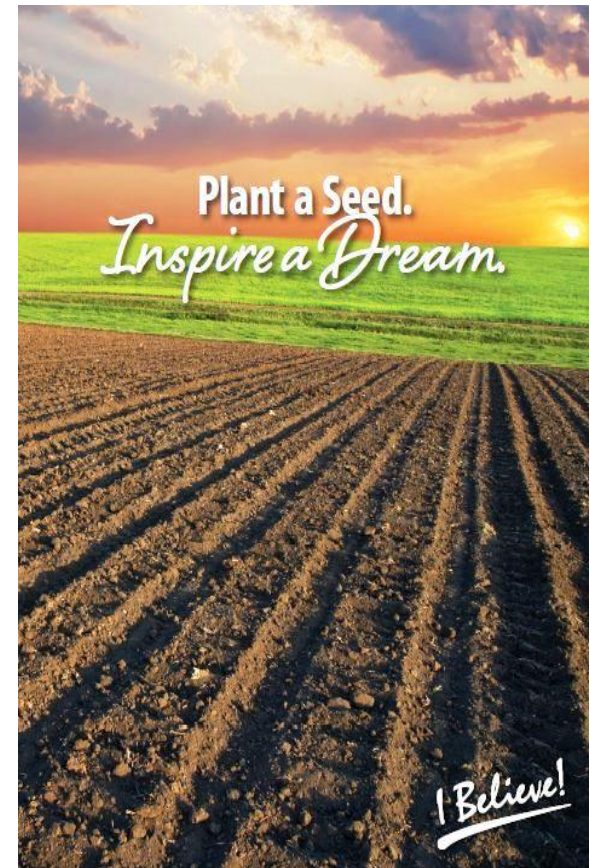
Service is the new currency

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We all have a story about someone or something that shaped our lives and helped make us who we are today. My story is a 4-H story.

At an early age, 4-H was a way to make friends, participate in interesting projects and figuratively spread my wings. I learned to sew, sell 4-H cookies, engage with others and even to enhance my writing skills. And I can still remember how proud I was to be elected by my peers to be the club news reporter. It was my first leadership role.

As a 4-H member, we were each expected to conduct at least one demonstration as a way of being introduced to public speaking and sharing ideas in front of a group. Years went by and the groups grew bigger, as did leadership opportunities that came my way. As a result the world around me expanded. A mere 10 years of collective 4-H experiences is the foundation for who I am today – my cornerstone.



Story grew from believers

My story is the result of countless people who believed the future held great things for me – when all I wanted was to have fun, be outside and learn new things. But those servant leaders saw way more for this young 4-Her than I could have. Dedicated Extension agents, local business owners, amazing 4-H leaders and many more gave of their time, talents and encouragement to help make dreams become realities – blue ribbons, a trip to the National 4-H Congress, being named a Danforth scholarship recipient and much more.

Without exception, everything each of us has is built on the work of others. Who we are is a result of the dreams and examples of parents, mentors, community members and leaders far and

wide. Many of them pour themselves out selflessly so others can achieve things they never will. They give and serve so others can succeed – and they are my heroes. They embody the true meaning of “servant leaders.”

Today I see that those servant leaders had something important in common with me – a love of agriculture and an unwavering confidence that the future of the dairy industry is alive and well.

Service is the new currency

Dairy community: servant industry

Though dairy producers account for less than 2 percent of the population, the impact we have on all of America and beyond is immeasurable. Not just because of the product we make or the programs we support, but also because of our ability to work together across county and state lines, through associations and organizations, including numerous generations and demographics. Working together is fundamental to servant leadership.

Service is the new currency

In “The Servant as Leader,” an essay Robert K. Greenleaf first published in 1970, he wrote, “The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, and to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”

Visionary and credible, a servant leader truly does what it takes to give to others. I challenge each one to be a servant leader. Impact the hopes and dreams of those in the next generation. Commit to their hopes and dreams. Help others be successful – show up, listen and be present. Coach if they seem misguided.

An untold number of people benefit from the service of those who take an interest in their lives. Be one of those good people, changing lives with support – whether through encouragement and guidance, a sponsorship, a mentorship or active participation in programs that grow and develop the next generation of dairy leaders.

The new term for greatness is “service” and service is the new currency. Take it from a young 4-H girl.

Deb Reinhart is the executive director of the Professional Dairy Producers Foundation, a mission sponsor of PDPW.



Professional Dairy Producers Foundation

Tom Thibodeau of Viterbo University roleplays a scenario with attendees of the 2016 Cornerstone Dairy Academy™ program. Students and audiences agree he is one of the most compelling presenters on the topic of servant leadership and its critical role in our world today.



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