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NEWS RELEASE: 4-H to Expand STEM Maker Space at Bismarck-Henning Elementary

BISMARCK–STEM surrounds us on a daily basis. Standing for “Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics,” STEM contributes to the cellphones we carry around in our pockets, the roads we take to work each morning and the calculations we make when comparing prices at the grocery store. Additionally, as science, technology, engineering and mathematics continue to develop, STEM occupations continue to grow in popularity and demand every year.

To help introduce youth to STEM, 4-H serving Vermilion County collaborated with Bismarck-Henning Elementary School and expanded their Maker Space this spring. Through a grant and donation by the Illinois 4-H Foundation Board of Directors and Vermilion County 4-H Federation, this project has received \$1,900 to establish a Maker Space as a center for students at the school to learn all about STEM. The Illinois 4-H Foundation Board of Directors awarded \$1,000 through the 4-H Club Growth and Innovation Grant, and Vermilion County 4-H Federation contributed the remaining \$900.

The Bismarck-Henning Elementary School STEM Maker Space 4-H Club will serve 350 youth in kindergarten through fourth grade. Nearly a dozen teachers will serve as leaders of the club, educating youth in topics such as computer science and robotics through research-based curriculums provided by Illinois 4-H. One resource available to youth that was purchased through the grant consists of LEGO Education WeDo 2.0 Core kits, which provide hands-on STEM activities for youth.

All Kindergarten through fourth-grade students will have the opportunity to utilize the Maker Space during school time. Kristin Puckett, University of Illinois Extension 4-H Program Coordinator, expressed her excitement about this partnership, stating “I am eager to have so many new youth join the Vermilion County 4-H program. 4-H membership will provide these students with additional hands-on education opportunities that they can translate into life skills and future careers.”

Lisa Acton, Lisa Acton, District Curriculum & Assessment Director at Bismarck-Henning, has been instrumental in getting the Maker Space established at the elementary school. She has enjoyed seeing the youth utilize the space, stating “The Makerspace room has provided our students at BHES tremendous opportunities to be creative and critical thinkers. Not only are students excited to be a part of the STEM curriculum and the 4-H partnership, but we feel that we are enabling the next generation of innovators to create and design in ways that will truly engage their learning.”

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