

W.E. SKELTON 4-H EDUCATIONAL
CONFERENCE CENTER



The
CAMPAIGN
for VIRGINIA TECH
Invent the Future

 Virginia Tech



“Before going to camp, I felt at first that I would be confused, but when I got there, it was fun and I made many new friends. I took riflery class and I learned all the parts of the rifle and about being safe. We played all kinds of games and learned a lot, too. If I have the money next year and try my best in school, I would go back because I had lots of fun there.”

— A ROANOKE COUNTY CAMPER

W.E. SKELTON 4-H EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER

IN AN ERA DEFINED BY EDUCATION REFORMS, SHIFTING SOCIAL VALUES, AND CHANGES TO TRADITIONAL FAMILY LIFE, PERHAPS NO GROUP FACES MORE PRESSURE THAN OUR NATION'S YOUTH. AS THE SOCIAL FABRIC THAT ONCE SUPPORTED AND NURTURED THE NEXT GENERATION CONTINUES TO ERODE, AND OUR YOUTH TURN TO POPULAR MEDIA FOR GUIDANCE AND THE CULTURE OF THEIR PEERS FOR ADVICE, WE MUST STAND READY TO AID THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT BOLDLY STEP FORWARD TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE. THESE INSTITUTIONS DEPEND ON CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT HELP IDENTIFY WAYS TO OVERCOME THE EMOTIONAL BARRIERS OF APATHY, AND THEY CREATE AND OFFER PROGRAMS TO OFFSET THE NEGATIVE COUNSEL TO WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EXPOSED.

One obstacle for the institutions that provide programmatic support to parents and educators is identifying and maintaining venues that are well-equipped for the variety of skills and services the community needs. Many youth programs that used to provide locations for their own efforts are increasingly unable to afford the high cost of operations. Even among those that can, the struggle to keep these facilities fully staffed and adequately equipped can easily overwhelm the programmatic initiatives so desperately needed.

The W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center at Smith Mountain Lake is committed to facing these challenges and inventing a bold new future. For more than 40 years, the center has helped to form tomorrow's leaders by offering innovative programs and safe facilities for 4-H members and other youth groups from ages 5 to 19. In this educational center they acquire the knowledge, life skills, and attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, contributing, and productive members of society.

“The 4-H experience today, at every level, is more important than ever. It has the potential to impact young people who participate in these 4-H programs in ways that go far beyond other educational opportunities — citizenship, leadership, and friendships to name just a few.”

— GARNETT SMITH,
SKELTON 4-H CENTER VICE PRESIDENT
FOR DEVELOPMENT





BRIAN HAIRSTON
Henry County 4-H Extension Agent

Brian Hairston is a portrait of service. As a young boy Hairston participated in 4-H in Henry County, where he was born and raised. Because he believes so strongly in the mission of the 4-H program, Brian continued his involvement over the years, moving from a participant to a leader within the organization. He has established 4-H programs in various private schools in the area, and today Brian is an extension agent for the Henry County-Martinsville 4-H camp. The summer camp he organizes each year has the highest participation rate in the commonwealth. His service exemplifies the 4-H mission of helping our youth become caring, productive citizens.

ENRICHING LIFELONG LEARNING

At the W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center, a research-based curriculum is put into practice through adventure activities that bring valuable learning experiences at a critical time in each youth's life. Almost 120,000 4-H members, thousands of other school children, and representatives from groups like the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the Carilion Camp for the Terminally Ill have participated in the center's programs and used our facilities. The number of individuals and groups who use the center grows significantly each year. Teachers in secondary education across the state also find educational support here in meeting the Virginia Standards of Learning through practical workshops and field experiences.

Located on 120 acres with 2.5 miles of shoreline on picturesque Smith Mountain Lake, the center offers 4-H members and other youth the chance to engage year-round in a wide range of physical and intellectual learning experiences. A few of the 23 educational programs include leadership, citizenship, robotics, digital technologies, computer labs, canoeing, ropes, climbing wall, shooting sports, and small-group interaction. Highly qualified staff members challenge the participants to use problem-solving skills to prepare them to take long-term, active roles in their own lives. Emphasis is placed on citizenship, leadership, how to plan and work together, and the importance of respecting other people. The central theme of 4-H education, "learn by doing," encourages youth to participate in hands-on education and adventure programs that deepen and enrich lifelong learning, and our six pillars (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship) of the "Character Counts!" program ensure that students learn foundational values they might not otherwise be exposed to in public schools or their community.

"The permanent establishment of a robotics teaching lab at the 4-H center allows for a fun and non-threatening environment in which youth can become interested in mathematics, science, engineering, and logical thinking in order to be competitive in today's international work world."

— T. MARSHALL HAHN
MEMBER OF THE SKELTON 4-H CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Adventure programs are just one of the many ways youth put into practice the values they learn at the 4-H Center. They also learn to follow instructions, engage in friendly competition, enjoy the camaraderie of their peers, and inquire about the world around them, in addition to skills they gain through physical activities like canoeing or riflery. With more than 23 educational programs and 25 facilities, the center is well-equipped to handle comprehensive, multidimensional instruction.





Teachers, parents, and civic leaders see successful outcomes firsthand as youth leave our summer educational programs with a renewed sense of their own possibilities. At the center, we measure success by the ever-increasing number of youth who want to participate in all that we offer. Many of these youth return year after year, and some return to become camp educators. This is a clear testament to the value of the experience the W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center provides.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL YOUTH

The 4-H Educational Conference Center has already proven its value in educating young people, thereby shaping a generation of productive citizens year after year. In order to continue our mission and help as many youth as possible, we must find ways to make our programs more accessible. Because of financial constraints, many youth are unable to attend camp. No deserving youth should be neglected because a family lacks the means to pay. Currently, we can subsidize less than half of the cost of each participant, and we would like to do more. You can help.



“I want to thank you for giving the scholarship to 4-H campers so kids can go and have fun and make new friends. Our mom and dad work hard but just couldn’t pay for me and my sisters to go. They thank you, too. When we get older we will try and do what you’ve done for us. We wish the world had more people like you. Thank you again.”

— TAUBMAN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT FROM PULASKI COUNTY



The success of the center and the increased demand for our programs and facilities require us to constantly upgrade and modernize. This is needed to accommodate changes in educational programs and technology and to provide the safest, most-up-to-date equipment that is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and American Camping Association compliant. To continue to serve this growing population, we plan to construct new facilities and renovate many of our activity and learning centers over the next several years. Current areas under consideration include an indoor/outdoor shooting complex to teach safe use of firearms and archery equipment, equestrian area upgrades, a new multipurpose recreational building, a new cultural enrichment center, and expansion of the leadership challenge course. There is a need to endow each of the 23 programs and provide financial resources for building maintenance and renovation costs for our 25 facilities. Private support is needed to ensure these quality programs can continue and to keep participation fees within reach of every deserving youth. This will ensure that our programs will always be in place to help nurture productive citizens.

The collaborative effort between Virginia Tech and the 4-H center is best illustrated as these youth grow to become successful members of their communities. Through the Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future, we will raise funds to educate future generations of adults and leaders in the commonwealth of Virginia. With the support of generous donors, we will be able to attain our vision of a center that is fully self-sufficient, one that allows families to send their youth without the burden of cost, and one that provides up-to-date buildings, highly trained teaching staff, and an education based on the latest research. By meeting these goals, we will be in a unique position to positively and profoundly affect the future of hundreds of thousands of youth in Virginia and the quality of life throughout the commonwealth.

HELP US HELP OTHERS

While we are proudly affiliated with Virginia Tech and have a dedicated board of directors, more than 93 percent of our operating costs come from private funding. It is our donors' generosity that ensures there will always be adequate financial support for youth to attend the 4-H center, and that our educational programming changes will match the needs of contemporary society. The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future is a unique opportunity for you to help us help others. The transformation your donation makes will be immediately visible on our campus and immediately realized in our most important resource — our youth.



CAMPAIGN PRIORITIES

Capital Projects	\$2.9 million
Equipment	\$170,000
Programs	\$830,000
Ongoing and Future Support	\$500,000
TOTAL	\$4.4 MILLION



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