



Lincoln University Area Educator Mariann Wright reads Helen Kettelman’s book “Waynetta and the Cornstalk” on YouTube as part of the “Imagine Your Story” summer reading program. The story is a retelling of “Jack and the Beanstalk” set in Texas.

‘Imagine Your Story’

Youth learn the art of storytelling through recreating tales of old

Storytelling is how we document our history and first imagine the technologies and innovations of the future. Even before written language, mankind crafted stories and shared them in oral tradition and in picture form. Storytelling is an art form that continues to evolve with humankind and adapt to the current medium of communication. With outlets such as film and social media so accessible to the masses, it is guaranteed that stories will continue to be imagined and shared with others.

Over the summer, Lincoln University Cooperative Extension and Bootheel 4-H joined forces with the Caruthersville Public Library to host a special reading program – “Imagine Your Story.”

Each week of the six-week program highlighted a different type of imagined story. Pemiscot County 4-H Area Educator, Ms. Mariann Wright, discussed the characteristics of fairy tales, myths, fables, folk tales, tall tales and nursery rhymes through video presentations. The overall takeaways were the importance of oral and written traditions, cultural differences in similar themes, and the

general idea that good overcomes evil. Although each of the types of imagined story highlighted had common characteristics, Wright explained the distinct properties that made each story part of an overall genre.

Wright then hosted the weekly online story time, which was accessible on the group’s private Facebook pages and the Bootheel 4-H YouTube channel. Each story was selected based on its appeal to children while considering variety in culture and inclusiveness of characters. One goal was to introduce participants to retellings and alternate versions of possible familiar stories. Consideration was also given to stories that could be reread to family members, friends and household pets. All stories selected are in the local library catalogue and available for checkout.

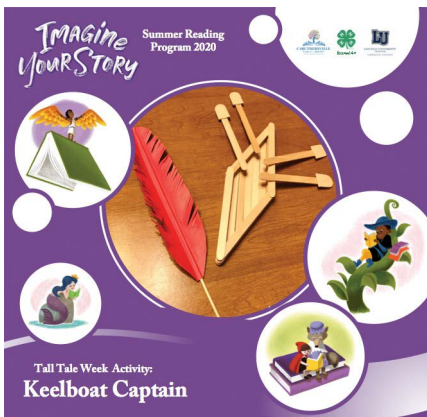
Each week also included a fun “Take & Make” activity. These activities were developed by Wright to coordinate with the weekly theme while introducing the participants to a variety of subjects and targeting various skills. Weekly themed activities covered the topics of



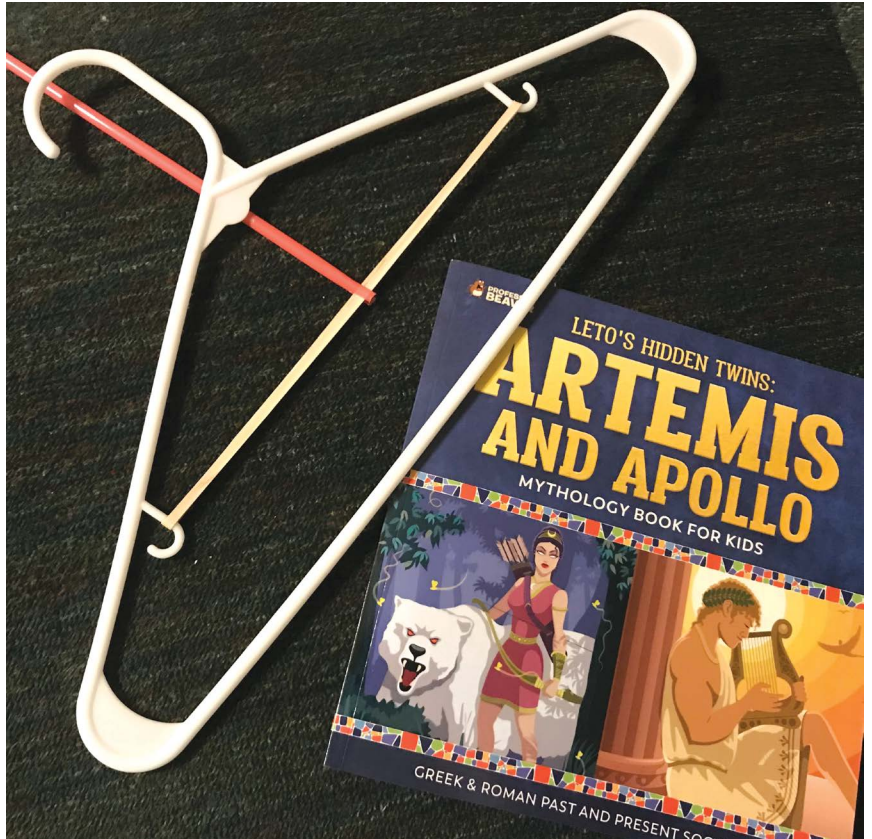
The "Take & Make" activity "Treat Basket for Grand'mere" paired with the book "Petite Rouge" by Mike Artell.



The "Take & Make" activity "Beanstalk in the Clouds" paired with the book "Waynetta and the Cornstalk" by Helen Ketteman.



The "Take & Make" activity "Keelboat Captain" paired with the book "Mike Fink" by Steven Kellogg.



The "Take & Make" activity associated with the book "Leto's Hidden Twins: Artemis and Apollo" instructed youth on how to make a bow and arrow from a coat hanger, a rubber band, and a drinking straw.

agriculture, sports and fitness, STEM, cooking and nutrition, culture and history, and arts and crafts. Participants were able to collect the "Take & Make" packets from the Caruthersville Public Library. Each packet also included the guide sheet and the supplies needed to complete the project. Suggestions were made to adapt each project for the ages and stages of the wide range of participants. Prediction, conceptual thinking and alternate-ending questions were posed for each story.

These weekly videos expressed priorities taught by 4-H, such as public speaking, demonstrations, illustrated talks and positive communication arts. Overall themes in 4-H work were evident through the use of positive youth development principles, the discussion of entrepreneurship and underlying critical thinking concerning social justice.

The themes, books and activities covered in the summer 2020 program were:

- Waynetta and the Cornstalk, by Helen Ketteman (Fairy Tale)
Activity: Beanstalk in the Clouds
- Leto's Hidden Twins: Artemis & Apollo, by Professor Beaver (Myth)
Activity: Archery with Artemis & Apollo
- What's the MATTER with the Three Little Pigs, by Thomas Troupe (Fable)
Activity: Pick-y Piggy Construction



The "Take & Make" activity associated with Thomas Troupe's "What's the MATTER with the Three Little Pigs" was called "Pick-y Piggy Construction."

- Petite Rouge, by Mike Artell (Folktale)
Activity: Treat Basket for Grand'mere
- Mike Fink, by Steven Kellogg (Tall Tale)
Activity: Keelboat Captain
- Mary had a Little Glam, by Tammi Sauer (Nursery Rhyme)
Activity: Be-YOU-tiful Mirror

This program benefited the Pemiscot County Humane Society initiative called "Read for the Animals." For every 100 hours of reading logged by the community, the Caruthersville Public Library donated \$50 to the Humane Society (up to a maximum of \$500). Readers logged hours and reported on the program's private Facebook group each week. Children who participated in the program also received weekly badges that could be added to their "dog tag-style" chains. These badges were earned for completing the Take & Make activities, logging hours, posting photos and sharing feedback on the program.

This year, because of COVID-19 safety restrictions, the summer reading program took place primarily online, with sign-ups in the library and on their website and through the program Facebook page. Despite the summer reading program going virtual, partici-

pation was high and the program was a success! This summer, 115 individuals enrolled in Imagine Your Story.

Each of the videos created for Imagine Your Story continues to be available. These may be used for future club and project support. Wright has discussed the possibility of growing the program by including area school district librarians and other local public library staff. The current available videos would act as a springboard for the program. One idea is to have a permanent "Take & Make" station in the library where youth can complete the assembled packets on-site or at home. Talks are also in progress with school librarians who would allow 4-H staff to come into the schools and present in-person story times with a related activity.

Videos can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIoaZMHIDdl6tXTdgCwv6b-vKSGbkKfoPA> and more information about Imagine Your Story can be obtained from Lincoln University Cooperative Extension in Jefferson City, Missouri. Visibility on social media allows community members and stakeholders to see results of monies spent from USDA budgets appropriated to 4-H programs. ■