

GRADUATE AG RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT



Marie Laudeman

*"That's how I feel I'm giving back—inspiring leaders with my blog posts."
Marie Laudeman, M.S. candidate, Youth Development and Agricultural Education*

THE STUDENT: Marie Laudeman grew up on a farm in St. Joseph County, where she immersed herself in 4-H projects like wildlife, forestry, soil and water conservation, and beekeeping, to name a few. "I was very outdoorsy, and my parents nurtured my love of nature," she says. Those experiences, and opportunities through 4-H to interview and job-shadow natural resources professionals, led her to Purdue for an undergraduate major in Wildlife. After graduating in 2008, she worked with Indiana's Department of Natural Resources as a naturalist at Potato Creek State Park and then for Cardno JFNew environmental consulting firm. Through these hands-on work experiences she realized her passion was environmental education. "I was drawn back to Purdue because of my strong 4-H background, and I wanted to learn more about the extension side of natural resources," she explains. "It's rewarding that my graduate research is giving back to a youth program that helped me become who I am today." Her adviser is Extension Specialist Natalie Carroll, professor of Youth Development and Agricultural Education.

THE RESEARCH: Laudeman's focus is the online Indiana 4-H Natural Resource Club Blog (Indiana4hnrcub.wordpress.com) to support natural resource volunteer leaders across the state. The blog's innovative ideas and accurate information help readers "feel better equipped to succeed," she says. Laudeman's blog is part of a broader effort to overcome cost and distance in offering more learning opportunities to Indiana volunteers. She believes it also is building community among 4-H leaders and

could become self-sustaining as their knowledge increases.

CONVEYING ENTHUSIASM: "I love hearing from volunteers that they helped facilitate a learning experience that created an 'aha! moment' for a child, inspiring the child to make a positive change in their community," Laudeman says. "That's what 4-H is all about. The youth are the next generation of drivers of change in our world, so it's really important to empower them by making their volunteer leaders feel qualified."

SURPRISE OPPORTUNITIES: Purdue Extension's deep-rooted involvement across Indiana and her department's support make the university a perfect fit for Laudeman's interests. "Dr. Carroll and I have the same passion for environmental education," she says. "She is great about inviting me to assist her throughout the state in training volunteers, so I've had career-enhancing opportunities I had not expected."

FUTURE PLANS: After graduating this summer, Laudeman expects to continue collaborating with Purdue as she pursues a career as a naturalist; she currently works at Prophetstown State Park, but has accepted a position as the naturalist at Pokagon State Park. She enjoys international travel and is planning a trip to Iceland. Her own nature photography is featured in the home she shares with two pugs, Bugz and Purdue Petey.