Nelson and Marilyn Galle believe in giving back to their community and state. Their commitment to service was honed in their formative years in part, the couple said, through their involvement in Kansas 4-H.

Nelson Galle (BS ’58, agricultural education, MS ’64, adult and occupational education) currently serves as chair of the Kansas Board of Regents. The board has responsibilities for seven four-year universities, 19 two-year community colleges, and 10 technical colleges and schools in Kansas.

“Education is important to Kansans,” he said.

Nelson said learning Robert’s Rules of Order and how to lead a meeting as a 4-H member have proven assets throughout his varied career.

He interrupted his college education to travel to Turkey with the International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) program. The experience expanded his vision of a larger world and the need for international cooperation.
When he returned to K-State, he worked in the state 4-H office to find host homes for IFYE participants coming to Kansas and was active with Collegiate 4-H. While helping with state 4-H Round-up, he met his future wife: Marilyn Pence, a Shawnee County 4-H member.

Marilyn, who had been selected as a delegate to the National 4-H Conference, was attending Round-up and planned to attend K-State in the fall.

Marilyn (BS ’57, elementary education) considered studying agriculture, but said: “At the time, women were not encouraged to enter ‘a man’s field.’”

Still, Marilyn, who had earned the high individual score at the National 4-H Poultry Judging Contest, landed a spot on K-State’s award-winning poultry judging team. She was the only female on the team and the only female competitor at the national contest in Chicago.

Marilyn said she believes that judging skills learned in Kansas 4-H have strengthened her decision-making skills throughout her life.

“4-H offered opportunities in leadership that we didn’t have in school,” Marilyn said. “Meeting people from elsewhere in the state – and other states – also expanded our knowledge and understanding of a larger world.”

Marilyn’s teaching career spanned 30 years. Nelson taught vocational agriculture for five years before moving into agribusiness. He rose to the position of vice president of administration for Kansas-based Hesston Corporation. His career included an assignment that took the family to live in Belgium.

A downturn in farm equipment sales could have ended Nelson’s career – he is not shy about admitting that he was “laid off at age 50.”

The couple called on their farm and educational backgrounds and their expertise in poultry judging. Working together, they developed a thriving business in the turkey industry.

Within 10 years, their Central Kansas Hatchery, located in Moundridge, employed 50 people and reached $4 million in sales.

When the couple sold the hatchery, they decided “to retire” to Manhattan.

In addition to his position on the board of regents, Nelson has served as president of the K-State Alumni Association and chairman of the KSU Foundation Executive Committee.

Marilyn, a 4-H community leader for about 20 years, said that she likely would be most remembered for leading a tree-planting campaign in Moundridge, part of local efforts with the statewide PRIDE Program. She is a member of the Kansas 4-H Foundation Board and has served as its chairperson for four years.

“Giving back is what it’s all about,” Marilyn said. “We have grown through our experiences, and want to do our part to ensure that others, through a variety of educational opportunities, can do the same.”

To read more 4-H profiles, go to www.kansas4-h.org and click on Centennial Profiles.

– Nancy Peterson