

This Is Minnesota 4-H



Mission Statement: Minnesota 4-H Youth Development makes measurable impacts in the lives of Minnesota youth in out-of-school time.

Vision Statement: Minnesota 4-H Youth Development is recognized and respected by a broad cross-sector of audiences as a leader in the application of positive youth development through educational programs that balance research, design, and practice.

Why 4-H?

4-H provides a chance for young people to belong – to be part of a group their own age, to learn new things and do fun things together. Through 4-H, young people have opportunities to:

- Learn new skills, gain knowledge, and develop positive attitudes.
- Develop and use their creative talents.
- Learn to make intelligent decisions and to solve problems.
- Develop a feeling of self-worth, while respecting the rights and privileges of others.

In brief, the purpose of 4-H is to provide a variety of learning experiences for youth that contribute to their personal growth and development and that will help them to become contributing, self-reliant, and responsible members of society.

Essential Elements of 4-H

Youth development, the process of growing up and developing one's capacities, happens no matter what we do. The challenge is to promote positive youth development and plan quality experiences with young people. In 4-H, we use the following Essential Elements to accomplish this: *(National 4-H - Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture)*

Belonging

Youth need to know they are cared about by others and feel a sense of connection to others in the group. This “fellowship” has always been an important part of a 4-H experience. 4-H gives youth the opportunity to feel physically and emotionally safe while actively participating in a group. Research suggests that a sense of belonging may be the single most powerful positive ingredient we can add into the lives of children and youth. This includes:

- Positive relationships with a caring adult.
- An inclusive environment.
- A safe environment.

Mastery

To develop self-confidence youth need to feel and believe they are capable and must experience success at solving problems and meeting challenges. By exploring 4-H

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projects and activities, youth master skills to make positive career and life choices. To do so, youth must have access to quality research-based content and have the

opportunity to learn by doing. They also need a safe environment for making mistakes and getting feedback, not just through competition but also as an ongoing element of participation. Finally, youth need the breadth and depth of topics to pursue their own interests. To be successful, youth must have:

- Engagement in Learning.
- Opportunity for Mastery.

Independence

Youth need to know that they are able to influence people and events through decision-making and action. By exercising independence through 4-H leadership opportunities, youth mature in self-discipline and responsibility, learn to better understand themselves and become independent thinkers. For Independence, youth must have the:

- Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future.
- Opportunity for self-determination.

Generosity

Youth need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose. By participating in 4-H community service and citizenship activities, youth connect to communities and learn to give back to others. It's clear that these experiences provide the foundation that helps us understand the "big picture" of life and find purpose and meaning. Community service projects allow 4-H club members to see that their effort to help others is important and valuable. Youth learn that they do not live in a secluded world, but in a global community, that requires awareness and compassion for others. To learn Generosity, youth must have an:

- Opportunity to value and practice service for others.

Minnesota 4-H Youth Development:

A part of the University of Minnesota, offers a range of short and long term educational programs that meet the needs of young people from kindergarten through one year past high school. The 4-H Youth Development program invites all youth to participate. 4-H Adventures are short-term programs specialized by specific subject matters such as performing arts, technology, animal science, or nutrition and fitness. 4-H Clubs meet regularly in a sequence of at least six sessions in community or school settings encompassing a variety of learning topics. Minnesota 4-H also offers online, after school, youth leadership, camping, and other programs for varying lengths of time throughout the year. Older youth can be involved as volunteer leaders in their areas of interest. In result, all youth participating in any program offered by Minnesota 4-H Youth Development are considered 4-H members.

What Makes 4-H Different?

4-H is unique because it is the only youth organization tied to the research base of our nation's land-grant university system. This connection allows Extension staff and the volunteers they work with to receive training based on the most up-to-date research on youth development theory and practice. 4-H club work is supported by a combination of federal, state and county funds. Substantial support also comes from private sources – local, state and national. Business and industry, farm and civic organizations and individuals support 4-H because they believe in the worth of the program. The National 4-H Council and the Minnesota 4-H Foundation are not-for-profit organizations that support the 4-H Youth Development Program by working to acquire resources.

What's In It for Youth?

The Minnesota 4-H Youth Survey was conducted in 2001 to determine whether youth were experiencing positive youth development opportunities through their 4-H experiences and to assess their attitudes about school and community, risk indicators, and involvement in other activities. The survey revealed:

- **Through 4-H clubs, youth reported:**
 - * A greater sense of belonging
 - * Quality relationships with adults
 - * Active parent involvement
- **Youth involved in 4-H are more likely to:**
 - * Volunteer in their communities
 - * Be involved in sports and fine arts
- **Youth involved in 4-H are less likely to have:**
 - * Spent six or more hours per week watching TV or playing video and computer games
 - * Stolen something
 - * Damaged property
 - * Smoked cigarettes
 - * Consumed alcohol
 - * Ridden in a car where the driver was drinking

The complete survey can be found on the University of Minnesota's Center for Youth Development web page at www.fourh.umn.edu.

