

Views from VanDeWalle

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This is 4-H

My colleague, Megan Burda in York County did a great job describing 4-H in one of her recent columns so I decided to share facts about 4-H in case you are unfamiliar or haven't experience 4-H in many years, as it has changed and evolved with the times.

The 4-H Pledge – *I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world.*

Head, Heart, Hands, and Health are the four H's that describe how youth are engaged in the 4-H program. Using their heads they learn to manage many different things in their 4-H projects and life. Through their heart, they learn to relate to others and be caring to those around them and their projects. With their hands, 4-Hers are able to work on various projects. By living healthy they are practicing being capable of caring for self and others.

How can being involved in 4-H foster youth's success? In 2002 the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development longitudinal study began and was then repeated annually for eight years. There were more than 7,000 adolescents from across 42 states in the United States that participated in the study. The Tufts research team examined how structured-out-of-school time learning, leadership experiences, and adult mentoring that young people receive through 4-H plays a role in helping them achieve success.

4-Hers practice responsibility by being involved in a variety of different projects offered through the program. The project areas are Animal Science, Communication and Expressive Arts, Entrepreneurship, Environmental Education and Earth Sciences, Family and Consumer Sciences, Healthy Lifestyle Education, Leadership and Citizenship, Plant Science, and Plant Science and Technology. If a youth chooses to participate in a Healthy Lifestyle Education project, they may learn the skill of meal planning for themselves and their family. This skill could lead to them actually planning out healthy meals for themselves and their family members and may even include keeping a food budget for their family.

4-Hers practice responsibility by caring for animals daily in various animal science projects. 4-Hers make sure their animals have a safe place to be, have appropriate food and water, and that their animals are cared for and can be handled. This takes much time and dedication by the 4-Her and their family and does not just happen one week out of the year at the county fair. 4-Hers in livestock projects take 4-H Livestock Quality Assurance to help prepare them for daily care and management. They also work closely with their family members and veterinarian and participate in animal science contests throughout the year.

The Tufts research longitudinal study showed that compared to their peers, youth involved in 4-H programs excelled in several areas.

4-Hers are:

- Nearly 4x more likely to make contribution to their communities.
- About 2x more likely to be civically active.
- Nearly 2x more likely to participate in science programs during out-of-school time, 2x more likely (Grade 10) and nearly 3x more likely (Grade 12) to take part in science program compared to girls in other out-of-school time activities.

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- Nearly 2x more likely to make healthier choices.

For information on how you can be involved in 4-H in Fillmore County, go to fillmore.unl.edu or for Clay County 4-H information, go to clay.unl.edu.

Source: The Positive Development of Youth; Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, Tufts University.