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True Leaders Grow Here

How can a young person develop leadership, citizenship, and life skills while having fun and meeting new friends? 4-H may be the answer!

4-H is a community of young people, ages 5-18, across America who are learning those skills. It empowers youth to reach their full potential while working and learning in partnership with caring adults. This organization is not just for rural youth. Today, 4-H serves youth in rural, urban, and suburban communities in every state across America. 4-H'ers are tackling the nation's top issues, like global food security, climate change, sustainable energy, childhood obesity, and food safety.

Youth may take part in 4-H through a variety of ways: Clubs, out-of-school programming, school enrichment programs, or as independent members. In Nebraska, one out of every three young people is taking part and reaping the benefits.

What are some of the benefits of being in 4-H? 4-H'ers gain subject matter knowledge, while learning life skills, such as:

- critical thinking
- problem solving
- respecting self, others, and the environment
- communication
- serving others
- choosing healthy, safe lifestyles
- managing change and challenges

Youth benefit from fun, researched-based educational programs through affiliation with University of Nebraska. There are over 150 projects from which to choose, like rockets, livestock, home environment, art, and computers. Through these projects, youth gain valuable skills and knowledge to help them in their future.

Tufts University's Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development discovered that the structured out-of-school time learning, leadership experiences, and adult mentoring play a vital role in helping participants achieve success. The study shows 4-H'ers are two times more likely to participate in science programs during out-of-school time and nearly two times more likely to make healthier choices.

Another aspect of 4-H is the opportunity to participate in service learning activities, where kids learn the benefits of helping others. According to Tufts, youth are nearly four times more likely to contribute to their communities and about two times more likely to be civically active.

Signing up for 4-H is easy online. Just contact your local extension office for details.

Source: Rhonda Herrick, Extension Educator, Kearney/Franklin Counties; Tufts University study “The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Finding from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development.”