

News Article

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On The Extension Line

Kansas 4-H the Experience

With this week October 6-12 being the National 4-H Week, I thought I would share with you a little about what is Kansas 4-H and how it has affected so many young people across the State and Nation.

While 4-H had its beginnings in rural America, it now serves youth in urban and suburban as well as rural communities. Kansas 4-H is open to youth between the ages of 7 and 19. The new 4-H year starts in October, so many prefer to join 4-H at the start of the school year. New 4-H enrollment, however, is open year round, so youth can join any time.

4-H is a nationwide program led by state land-grant universities in cooperation with local county/district extension councils. In Kansas, 4-H is the largest youth educational program, aside from public schools.

4-H Clubs: In a 4-H club youth enroll in a variety of projects. Community clubs typically have structured business meetings, and emphasize community service, recreational activities and improving communication skills.

4-H and Families: In this busy world, schedules often send family members in a variety of directions. 4-H can bring families together. 4-H families learn together. They plan meetings, events, projects and activities together. Family members help out as club leaders, project leaders, meeting helpers, transportation aides and in a variety of other ways. Parental involvement can help ensure the best learning experience for your child.

What do family members say about 4-H?: "In my opinion, 4-H is the best youth organization-it's not gender or age specific. It's a family organization. Today, with so many forces working against the family, 4-H helps build and reinforce the family."

"I just can't say enough about 4-H and the affect it has had on my life. The experiences and values I gained were limitless. My children have participated in 4-H and it has been a positive influence in their lives, too. I have been able to be a project leader in their club, so it has been enjoyable for me to give back to an organization from which I received so much."

What do 4-H members say about 4-H?: "When I think of 4-H, I think of the adult leaders who have given their time for our club. Their devoted example and involvement in our lives has taught me what it means to care, to be committed, to be community-minded and to be creative. 4-H affected my life because it taught me how to be part of other people's lives--it provided wonderful opportunities to meet and know people in my community, county and state."

4-H and the Community: As part of the 4-H experience, 4-H members are encouraged to learn about and contribute to the betterment of their communities. 4-H also utilizes a variety of community resources to enhance the educational experience of members. Those resources may include meeting places, guest speakers, volunteers and field trips.

What do people in the community say about 4-H?: "The 4-H experience provides a huge advantage to kids. The opportunities in 4-H teach them organizational and presentation skills that stand out in the classroom."

"I benefitted from my experiences as a 4-H member. I might not be doing the things I'm doing today if I hadn't had such positive experiences in 4-H. Giving my time is my way of saying "Thank you.""

Projects: In 4-H, youth "learn by doing." Much of that learning happens through project experiences. From beef to

bicycles...electricity to entomology...forestry to food science...photography to plant science...rabbits to rockets...Kansas 4-H offers 29 project areas designed to develop the wide range of interests that appeal to today's young people. In addition to subject-matter skills, many young people develop interests that last a lifetime.

Life Skills: Club participation, projects and friendships with other members become memorable parts of the 4-H Program. Equally important are the skills that last a lifetime. Successful adults often credit their experiences in 4-H as turning points in their lives.

They credit planning, organization and public speaking skills as essential to their success. The Kansas 4-H Program has played a leadership role in identifying the five life skills most needed to help young people.

Skills learned in 4-H last a lifetime:

- A positive self-concept.
- An inquiring mind.
- A concern for the community.
- Healthy interpersonal relationships.
- Sound decision making.

Volunteers: The 4-H Program, like many other youth groups, relies heavily on volunteers, who are involved in nearly every aspect of the program. More than 16,000 volunteers work directly with 4-H youth throughout the year as club leaders and project specialists. Another 3,500 assist with events, club organization and 4-H promotion.

If you have a youth interested in joining a 4-H club in Brown County please contact the Brown County Extension Office at 785-741-7871 or email Matt Young at mayoung@ksu.edu.

All educational programs and materials available without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating