

Why 4-H is Essential to Florida

Expert 4-H Staff Critical to Building Positive Youth

4-H professional staff are critical to providing a county 4-H youth development program to support volunteers and provide youth the benefits that 4-H provides.

Although University-based faculty and staff support 4-H statewide, it takes a local professional staff working in conjunction with well-trained staff to deliver 4-H effectively in each county. Research studies have shown that counties with full-time professional 4-H staff have almost four times more youth enrolled in 4-H clubs than counties without full-time 4-H staff.

Counties with full-time professional staff are more readily available to recruit, train and support volunteers and tend to have approximately four times the number of 4-H volunteers than counties without a professional staff.

4-H professional staff are expected to operate a comprehensive county 4-H program that meets *County 4-H Program Standards & Quality Indicators*. As part of the University of Florida IFAS Extension, a county 4-H agent has the ability to access and fully utilize state and national research on extension programs, as well as curriculum materials, through the nationwide Land Grant University system.



Impacts of Florida 4-H

4-H uses a variety of projects to engage youth in areas of interest. These projects not only guide youth to acquire new work and life skills but become the “vehicle” through which to maximize youth development. In 4-H project learning experiences, youth:

- are physically and emotionally safe.
- effectively communicate with others
- develop a sense of belonging in an inclusive environment
- develop and maintain positive relationships with others
- are actively engaged in their own development
- grow and contribute as active citizens through service and leadership
- develop skills they need to succeed for work and family life



Essential Elements of 4-H

Four-H professional staff encourage projects that implement the four essential elements of 4-H Youth Development:

- **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.
- **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.
- **Mastery** - In order to develop their self confidence, youth need to feel and believe they are capable and they must experience success at solving problems and meeting challenges to develop their self-confidence.
- **Generosity** - Youth need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose. By participating in the 4-H community service and citizenship activities, youth connect to communities and learn to give back to others.

