

Yes, 4-H is nice, but . . .

For over 100 years the 4-H program has involved young people and volunteers from all walks of life. Farm, city, town and rural. In fact, nation-wide, cities included, one in 10 adults have been involved in the 4-H program during their life. That clearly makes 4-H the largest, most comprehensive youth organization in the U.S. and even, in the world. 4-H continues as it began—a youth program organized by the Land Grant University System, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with local 4 H Councils, County Commissioners, Extension Councils and others.

It's not uncommon to have people question whether 4-H is really relevant or helpful. "Yes, it's a nice organization for sure, but we don't have time for nice. We need to know if it works", the line seems to go. People that make that statement are exactly right. Why should adults and young people carve time out of their already very-busy lives to take part in 4-H?

For the past five years a national study has been underway through Tuft's University to measure what youth activities in and out of school make a difference in the lives of youth. In addition, youth in grades 5-11 are asked what youth organizations they are a part of (if any) —how active they are in those organizations and what life and behavior choices they make for themselves. And, those same young people have been followed, and will continue to be followed for several more years to measure the ways in which they grow and mature.

Here is just a very small part of what is been learned so far: 4-H members are the most highly contributing members of their community as a whole, when compared to all other youth and youth organizations, and they are a more contributing member of their overall family compared to youth not in 4-H. Period.

In addition, 4-H Youth are 1.5 times more likely to be among the most positively developed youth in the community. They are 1.3 times more likely to be in the lowest group for Risk Behavior and Depression in the community.

The research continues. And, that research will help discover ways in which the 4-H program can be made even stronger. Why should you involve your child in 4-H? Why wouldn't you?!

Further information about the Tuft's University ongoing study can be found at <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu>.

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