



After-school computer labs provide safe, supervised environments that enrich students' educational experience.

For more than 100 years, Extension's 4-H programs have worked with young people across America to teach leadership, citizenship and life skills. Our goal is to create opportunities for youth as valued, contributing members of their communities. Rather than focus on youth problems, 4-H programs help young people ages 5 to 18 meet key developmental needs. The timeless 4-H pledge explains it best:

I PLEDGE ...

... my **HEAD** to clearer thinking
 Young people who are Competent—committed to learning and educational achievement

... my **HEART** to greater loyalty,
 Young people who are Caring—able to form responsive, caring relationships

... my **HANDS** to larger service,
 Young people who are Contributing—prepared to lead and serve in their communities

... and my **HEALTH** to better living, for my club, my community, my country and my world.
 Young people who are Capable—displaying physical and mental health.

State and Regional 4-H Youth Development specialists, as well as other Extension staff worked with over 10,994 youth and adult volunteers to plan, implement and evaluate local youth development programs, reaching 105,463 Missouri youths ages 5 to 18 in 2004. About 25% are enrolled in the 4-H club program, a yearlong educational experience that includes learning by doing in projects, community service, and family involvement. Others participate in 4-H school programs, seminars, conferences, camps, or childcare programs. In addition, faculty work with parents, caregivers, educators, and youth professionals to improve the systems that support young people.

Current Program Efforts:

- Agriculture Education for Youth—*Examples: 4-H Animal Science programs; Hatching Chicks*
- Character Education for Youth
- Community Youth Development —*Examples: Civic*

**University of Missouri Extension
 4-H Youth Development Programs**

Engagement, Community Service Learning, 4-H Global Education, Youth EXCEL, Youth Government Days

- Family & Community Resource Program (FCRP) —
Examples: Mentoring Children of Offenders
- Natural Resources Education and Environmental Stewardship for Youth —*Examples: 4-H Shooting Sports, 4-H Sports Fishing*
- Positive Youth Development During Out of School Time —*Examples: Educational trips and camps; 4-H Project work; 4-H Recognition and Scholarships; 4-H Afterschool programs*
- Support for Parents/Caregivers —*Examples: ParentLink Warmline, Project Family Support, Parenting Corners*
- Volunteer Leadership Development
- Workforce Preparation and Information Technology for Youth —*Examples: After-School Computer Labs, 4-H Mini-Society*

Strategies used by 4-H Youth Development Programs to impact children and teens:

- Volunteer and staff development programs engage caring youths and adults as volunteers to plan and carry out a variety of 4-H youth development programs and services.
- 4-H clubs offer long-term educational experiences where members learn life skills such as decision making, public speaking, and working with others. Members learn by doing under the guidance of adult volunteers who teach projects ranging from aerospace and arts to veterinary science and sport fishing.
- Community youth development includes work in collaboration with partners to address youth and family issues in the community and to engage youth people as partners and resources in youth development.
- 4-H special-interest programs include conferences, distance learning programs, day camps and other educational activities such as school-age care. They often reach youths with special needs, such as those living in group homes or youths who are physically or mentally challenged.
- 4-H school programs are short-term educational experiences that supplement learning in the classroom. Most are led by teachers or 4-H volunteers.

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Trends Impacting Missouri's Children and Teens:

Young people need educational opportunities that insure school success and prepare them for the future. Regular participation in extracurricular activities such as 4-H can lead to long-term benefits both in and out of school. Teens who consistently participated in extracurricular activities from eighth-through 12th-grade were:

- 70% more likely to attend college;
- 66% more likely to vote as young adults; and
- 50% more likely to volunteer.

Source: *Journal of Adolescent Research* (Vol. 18, Issue No. 06, November 2003).

Young people need safe, supervised and educational opportunities during out of school time. Quality programs happening from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., summers, evenings and weekends can transform these prime times for juvenile crime into golden hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and meaningful contributions to the community. In Missouri:

- 32% of K-12 youth spend an average of 7 hours per week unsupervised after school.
- More than 29% of K-12 youth in self-care would be likely to participate in an afterschool program if one were available in the community.

Source: *Afterschool Alliance, America After 3 pm Household Survey*

Employers are seeking workers who have technological and workplace skills of the future. Information technology is the fastest growing occupation in the country today. It is projected that six of the ten fastest growing occupations in the next ten years will require at least a bachelor's degree in information technology.

Issues of health, nutrition, physical fitness, and substance abuse are critical. In 2003:

- 14% of Missouri's teens smoked 20 more cigarettes in a 30 day period, compared to 10% of US teens.

- 16% of Missouri's teens ate 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, compared to 22% of US teens.
- 67% of Missouri's teens exercised vigorously at 3 days per week, compared to 63% of US teens.

Source: *Youth Risk Behavior Survey, MO Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education*

Leadership, citizenship and volunteering matter to young Missourians. The Conversation on Youth Development in 2002 involved young people and adults in Missouri and across the nation. The agenda for action calls for establishing local, state and national youth advisory boards so that youths' views are heard, and empowering youth by involving them in policy and decision-making roles in the community.

Issues of youth protection and safety are of growing importance for youth programs. Increased numbers of schools, churches and youth organizations are protecting their youth by requiring volunteers and employees to be screened for prior criminal histories. Federal, state and local initiatives related to food safety, homeland security and other related issues will also impact youth programs.

Parents, caregivers, and youth workers need support and resources to help be effective in fostering positive growth and development. More parents and caregivers are working outside the home. The demands of paid work may mean less time to be involved with their children's education or extra-curricular activities.

- The percent of Missouri households headed by single parents grew from 21.7 percent in 1990 to 28.9 percent in 2000.
- 78% of Missouri mothers with children ages 6-17 are in the paid workforce.
- One of every 18 youth in Missouri are being raised by their grandparents
- 11,265 Missouri children were in foster care in February 2005