Nebraska 4-H programs are delivered to one in three age eligible youth in all 93 counties in Nebraska. In 2008, approximately 30,000 youth in Nebraska were 4-H club members engaged in a variety of project opportunities. More than 10,000 youth participated in 4-H camping programs and over 70,000 participated in school-enrichment experiences. Many of these camps, clubs and programs are supported by the 12,000 volunteers who share their time and resources with youth across Nebraska.

“4-H has provided me an opportunity to share my skills and talents with young people. It has also broadened my knowledge in subjects I would not have studied: everything from the environment to bicycle safety to food science.”

– 4-H Volunteer

4-H in Nebraska

The mission of University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension 4-H is to empower youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnerships with caring adults. Nebraska 4-H continues working toward outcomes in a strategic plan that target four specific areas for our work: Science, Engineering and Technology, Health Lifestyles, Career Development and the development of Life Skills. To assess the success of Nebraska 4-H in reaching these outcomes, a mixed methods study was conducted during 2008. Approximately 1,500 youth from across the state contributed their responses. The results and participant comments shared in this report illustrate the impact Nebraska 4-H is making in the lives of young people.

Science, Engineering, & Technology

4-H in Nebraska has made a commitment to provide youth opportunities that will foster their interests and support their exploration of majors and careers in SET. Through 4-H, youth in Nebraska can learn how to apply science and technology to their projects, explore the ANDRILL (Antarctic Geological Drilling) Project, and experience robotics, GPS/GIS, and wind energy. Of those surveyed, 87% recognize the importance of science and technology to their future job; 68% are planning to pursue a career in a science, engineering, or technology-related field; and 88% understand how science and technology relate to their 4-H project.
Helping youth strengthen their nutritional and physical well-being is a priority of Nebraska 4-H. Nebraska 4-H staff and volunteers are incorporating lessons on physical and emotional health and safety in many 4-H experiences including an emphasis on the principles outlined by the MyPyramid. Healthy lifestyle programs focus on empowering youth to make healthier choices in their daily routines. Responses to the survey show that 82% of Nebraska 4-H youth choose healthy snacks over candy and pop. Additionally, 90% engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily.

The subject matter skills taught in 4-H are a foundation for a positive youth development experience. By participating in club projects and activities youth are able to connect their interests to future careers and build skills necessary for pursuing those experiences. Of those surveyed, 89% of participants identified they are learning skills in 4-H that could help them start their own business. Another 92% are learning skills they could apply to a future job, and 66% are exploring careers related to their 4-H projects. In a survey completed by Nebraska 4-H seniors it was reported that 95% will pursue post-secondary education.

Life skill development continues to be a primary emphasis in many 4-H programs. Through 4-H, youth are enhancing their decision-making skills and engaging in community service and leadership roles. Survey responses showed that 56% of youth are in a leadership role through 4-H, 86% participated in a community service project through 4-H, and 95% avoid getting into trouble by making good decisions.

4-H is also focused on helping youth develop communication skills that will serve them in future employment interviews, professional presentations and social occasions. In this survey 57% gave a speech through 4-H.