

MSU Extension 4-H Youth Development

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) 4-H Youth Development is delivered locally and operated at the state and national levels through a partnership between county governments, Michigan State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This partnership ensures that what 4-H pledges in outcomes for young people is backed by the research and knowledge base of the nation's premier land-grant universities and the support of county, state and federal governments. The activities in which youth participate are all based on child development research so that youth are involved in age appropriate learning experiences. 4-H programs use experiential learning and reflective thinking to create meaningful experiences leading to the development of critical life skills.

4-H programs engage youth aged 5 to 19. Adults are encouraged to become 4-H volunteers who share their knowledge and experiences with youth. In 2010, nearly 190,000 Michigan youth participated in 4-H with the support of about 20,000 adult volunteers, making it the largest youth development organization in the state. Approximately 53,000 youth pursued hands-on learning opportunities in environmental education and earth sciences through 4-H in 2010; 20,300 participated in science and technology activities and about 100,000 participated in plant and animal science activities. These numbers reflect the commitment Michigan 4-H has to engaging youth in science learning and the pursuit of careers in science-related fields.

Research has demonstrated that youth who participate in 4-H get better grades; are more likely to go to college; are more likely to pursue science courses and careers; are less likely to use drugs, cigarettes or alcohol; and are more likely to give back to their communities. 4-H'ers may be learning photography, building their own robot, growing a garden, writing and performing a song, or raising an animal, but more importantly they are learning to be leaders,

* Lerner, R. M., & Lerner, J. V. (2011). *Waves of the future – 2009: Report of the findings from the first six years of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*. Medford, MA: Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, Tufts University.

building self-confidence, growing in their awareness of good citizenship, creating their own futures and raising their expectations of themselves.*

Michigan 4-H Youth Development operates under a set of guiding principles for positive youth development. The guiding principles serve as the foundation for all of our programs. The seven principles are:

- ▶ Youth develop positive relationships with adults and peers.
- ▶ Youth are physically and emotionally safe.
- ▶ Youth are actively engaged in their own development.
- ▶ Youth are considered participants rather than recipients in the learning process.
- ▶ Youth develop skills that help them succeed.
- ▶ Youth recognize, understand and appreciate multiculturalism.
- ▶ Youth grow and contribute as active citizens through service and leadership.

Want to know more?

- ▶ To find a down-loadable version of this and other online resources to support “4-H Science Blast in the Class,” visit **4h.msu.edu/msu.edu/4h/science_blast**.
- ▶ To learn more about MSU Extension’s children and youth programs, including Michigan 4-H Youth Development, visit **msue.msu.edu**.
- ▶ To learn about the educational activities of Michigan 4-H Youth Development, visit **4h.msu.edu**.
- ▶ To connect with your local 4-H program, visit the MSU Extension staff search database at **people.msu.edu** or call toll-free **1-888-678-3464**.

