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# Virginia 4-H: **LEARN BY DOING**

4-H is a *community* of  
 young people  
across America who are learning  
leadership, citizenship and  
life skills.

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Virginia Cooperative Extension

 VirginiaTech  
Invent the Future



VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY





# Virginia 4-H — Where Youth and Adults Working with Youth, Learn, Lead, and Become Better Citizens

## A Message from the Director

Each year, thousands of youth and adults are involved in the Virginia 4-H program and benefit from the vast variety of learning opportunities it provides. As the youth development program of Virginia Cooperative Extension and a part of the land-grant university system, 4-H provides learning-through-experience educational programming to enrich the lives of Virginia youth. Virginia Tech and Virginia State are the land-grant universities in Virginia, and the partnership of both institutions provides a rich array of educational information and experiences for 4-H participants. The Virginia 4-H program has a place for **you!**

Simply defined, 4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. The mission of the Virginia 4-H program is to **develop youth and adults working with those youth to realize their full potential—becoming effective, contributing citizens through participation in research-based, non-formal, hands-on educational experiences.**

The program is available for youth ages 5 to 18 and is in every county and most cities throughout the commonwealth. Presently, over 160,000 members and 20,000 volunteers are involved in Virginia's 4-H program. They participate in 4-H educational opportunities and experiences designed to address the developmental needs to accomplish the 4-H mission. The essential elements of 4-H are **Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.** These correlate with the four H's in the 4-H emblem.

**Belonging** (represents the **HEART** of 4-H) — includes a positive relationship with caring adults and an inclusive/safe environment for you.

**Mastery** (represents the **HEALTH** of 4-H) — focuses on constructive learning experiences and includes engagement in learning and opportunities for mastery.

**Independence** (represents the **HEAD** of 4-H) — emphasis on learning and self-determination opportunities to see yourself as an active participant in the future.

**Generosity** (represents the **HANDS** of 4-H) — providing opportunities to value and practice service and generosity to others.

*“Through the 4-H program, I have gained confidence, skills, and am now better able to communicate. I am not afraid to get in front of groups, or speak to others.”*

12-year-old 4-H'er





In summary, 4-H provides many opportunities for caring relationships, constructive learning, real-life leadership experiences, and service to others and communities. I strongly encourage you to join the thousands of youth in the largest non-formal youth program in the state by getting involved with 4-H. The Virginia 4-H program will help you to become a better leader and a good citizen. Together, we are making the best better for the Commonwealth of Virginia!

*"It felt so good to see the smiles of the families when I delivered the food to them ... especially the children. The work was hard, and I was a bit nervous at first, but the hours I spent in the project were well worth it."*

**4-H Service Project Member**

Dr. Robert Ray Meadows  
Associate Director, 4-H  
Virginia Cooperative Extension





## How Can I Join 4-H?

Contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office and ask about the 4-H program. 4-H provides a large variety of educational learning opportunities and experiences. Leadership, citizenship, and life skills are taught through learn-by-doing projects, in local club programs, at 4-H camps, as well as at county, district, state, and national events.

### What kinds of 4-H opportunities are available for me in my community?

**Community 4-H clubs** (9 through 18 years of age) offer a variety of 4-H projects for their members, generally meet in homes or public buildings, meet 9 to 12 months of the year, and have elected youth officers.

**Project 4-H clubs** (9 through 18 years of age) focus on a single 4-H project or subject matter area (i.e. horse clubs, photography clubs, etc.), generally meet in homes or public buildings, meet 9 to 12 months of the year, and have elected youth officers.

**In-school 4-H clubs** (9 through 18 years of age) meet during school hours, are approved by the school system, and have elected youth officers.

**After-school 4-H clubs** (9 through 18 years of age) meet after school hours, usually from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., in a school or public building; use 4-H materials; and may or may not have elected youth officers (depending on its organizational setup, a short- or long-term club).

**4-H School Enrichment clubs** (9 through 18 years of age) meet during school hours and are designed to strengthen the members' knowledge of school subject-matter areas, thus complimenting what the school is teaching. The club may or may not have elected youth officers (depending on its organizational setup, a short- or long-term club).

**Special Interest 4-H groups** (9 through 18 years of age) have short-term learning experiences designed to create interest in a subject matter area, learn about 4-H, and have no elected youth officers.

**Cloverbud 4-H groups** are designed for youth 5 through 8 years of age who are introduced to 4-H through special learning activities designed for their age group. There are no elected youth officers and no competitive events for Cloverbuds.

The 9 through 18 years of age designation includes youth who will turn at least 9 during the 4-H year (October 1 through September 30), or do not exceed their 19th birthday during the same time period. The contact information for finding your local 4-H agent can be found on the Virginia Cooperative Extension website, [www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu), or in your local telephone book under the county government section, Cooperative Extension.

For additional information about Virginia 4-H, check the website, [www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h](http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h). For information on 4-H camping, see Benefits of 4-H Youth Camping.



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## 4-H Grounded by the PLEDGE

### I PLEDGE MY HEAD TO CLEARER THINKING ...

4-H provides you with opportunities to develop skills and confidence for leadership and self-discipline. Through 4-H leadership experiences, you can improve your ability to make connections between independence and responsibility. You can learn independence while learning how to think, plan, and reason.

### I PLEDGE MY HEART TO GREATER LOYALTY ...

Having a sense of belonging may be the single most powerful positive ingredient in the lives of youth. 4-H can give you a place to belong as you become involved with 4-H clubs, camping, and State Congress. You will connect with other youth and adults who provide you with an opportunity to be part of exciting and fun activities.

### I PLEDGE MY HANDS TO LARGER SERVICE ...

Part of the 4-H mission is to help you become a contributing member of your community and your world. 4-H programs will give you a chance to practice leadership, community service, and citizenship activities that connect you directly to your community. You can join other 4-H members throughout the state who are actively involved in planning and carrying out various community service projects. You will experience the benefits of caring about others and develop a positive attitude.

### I PLEDGE MY HEALTH TO BETTER LIVING ...

To develop self-confidence, you must be a good problem-solver and able to meet challenges. 4-H can provide you with these experiences through hands-on learning opportunities that will let you master and apply a variety of skills. Join 4-H and become motivated, competent and successful!



## FOR MY CLUB, MY COMMUNITY, MY COUNTRY, AND MY WORLD.

*“Due to my child’s medical needs, she doesn’t get the opportunity to go away without her parents that often... 4-H allows her the opportunity to be a ‘normal’ kid and do the activities that her non-disabled peers get to do without any problems. Thank-you! Thank-you! Thank-you for allowing her to experience 4-H.”*

4-H Parent

## What kinds of “learn by doing” projects are available?

### Animal Sciences

The 4-H Animal Science programs teach you to make informed decisions, keep records, manage resources, use scientific principles, and develop oral and written reasoning skills. You can learn about animals without owning one. If you choose a “live animal” project, you can practice and demonstrate what you learn at numerous supporting activities such as fairs, judging contests, shows, educational bowls, and other competitions. These programs also help you become aware of career opportunities in animal agricultural industries.



### Careers and Economic Education

Projects in 4-H Careers and Economic Education help you understand how abilities and interests play a role in choosing a career. They can also help you prepare for financial and credit responsibilities, teach you how to make time and money go further, and teach you how to exercise consumer rights and responsibilities. The concept of “Youth as Entrepreneurs” is emphasized.

### Citizenship

The 4-H Citizenship Program stresses community mindfulness by teaching you to make connections with local, state, and federal governments, voicing concerns and offering pro-active solutions to community problems. Service learning projects are encouraged. 4-H also offers intra- and interstate as well as international exchange opportunities to increase your awareness of diversity and appreciation of other cultures.

### Communication and Expressive Arts

4-H projects in this area include the creative and performing arts, photography, presentations, and public speaking. Your ability to communicate effectively is a basic skill for success in life and is sought by many employers. Public speaking is a cornerstone of 4-H. Completing a presentation about your topic is encouraged in all 4-H projects.

### Family Sciences

The 4-H Family Sciences projects offer you opportunities in the areas of self-care, personal presentation, sewing, clothing construction, consumer clothing purchases, babysitting, working with older adult friends, responsibility in being home alone, and interior design.

### Foods, Nutrition, and Health

Helping people develop good eating habits and adopt a healthy lifestyle is a key initiative in Virginia 4-H. Many of these projects incorporate the food journey from farmer to consumer, food-buying skills, and label reading. As a participant in these projects you will learn how to plan nutritious menus, handle food safely, incorporate exercise into daily living, and prepare tasty, nutritious snacks and meals.



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## Volunteers Helping Virginia Youth Learn: A Message to Future Volunteers

Does it excite you to see youth motivated about learning and doing? Do you think it might be fun to help a group of young people learn about your special interest topic or area of expertise?

If making a difference in the life of a young person appeals to you, become a 4-H volunteer leader. 4-H adult and teen volunteers work with Extension agents to provide leadership to 4-H groups. With training, supervision, and support from Extension agents, volunteers add their own expertise, talents, and experiences to 4-H activities.



Current research cites the importance of youth having long-term consistent relationships with adults, including those outside the family. Volunteers are essential to the successful delivery of 4-H programs. During the 2005-2006 year in Virginia: 20,405 adults and teens volunteered their time to 4-H – that's 519,324 volunteer hours worth \$17,524,472\* to mentor and teach youth. Contributions of time and effort by people like you make 4-H possible, and your caring attitude can contribute to developing positive youth-adult partnerships.

Volunteer leaders work with 4-H members who are neighbors, family members, and friends. Because they are from the same community, leaders know what issues are important in their locality. They know what the youth are dealing with in their lives and can understand how to help.

Become committed to the 4-H mission. Help youth acquire knowledge, life skills, and attitudes that will enable them to be self-directing, contributing, and productive members of society. Be a 4-H volunteer leader!

To volunteer, contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office. Opportunities for volunteer training and networking are available through the Virginia Association of Adult Volunteer Leaders (VAA4-HVL). Find more information at [www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/volunteers.html](http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/volunteers.html).

\* Based on a rate of \$17.79 per volunteer hour from Virginia Employment Commission, 2005-2006.

*"4-H has helped me to take better care of my things, to help others, and to be a person of character ... this should be a program for every youth."*

9-year-old 4-H'er



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## Benefits of 4-H Youth Camping



4-H camping is cooperative group living in a natural environment that focuses on developing life skills, social, spiritual, mental, and physical development.

Approximately 24,000 youth and teens participate annually in 4-H camping at six 4-H educational centers. These 4-H centers provide opportunities for you in three ways: 4-H residential camping, 4-H specialty/day camping, and 4-H school enrichment based upon the Virginia Standards of Learning.

The programs include leadership development, environmental and aquatic science, performing arts, shooting education, forestry, outdoor adventure, primitive skills, journalism and broadcasting, horsemanship and animal science, aerospace, wildlife, canoeing, swimming, leathercraft, fishing, tennis, and creative dance.

As campers you are supervised by caring teen and adult volunteers, who support, teach, and guide you through new experiences.

A study\* of Virginia 4-H camping conducted with youth campers ages 9 to 13 from across the state found that 4-H camp participation helped youth to learn to make new friends, develop new skills, and become more independent and able to take care of themselves.

A study of 363 parents/guardians of Virginia 4-H campers found that 4-H camp participation changed youth's behaviors in the areas of taking care of their own things (self-responsibility), becoming more independent (taking initiative), and sharing.



*All six 4-H Centers are accredited by the American Camping Association (ACA), a national organization which establishes programmatic and operational safety standards based upon the best practices of the camping industry.*

### For more information

Contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office or 4-H Educational Center.

<b>Airfield 4-H Educational Center</b> <a href="http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/airfield/">http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/airfield/</a>	757/899-4901
<b>Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center</b> <a href="http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/holiday/">http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/holiday/</a>	434/248-5444
<b>Jamestown 4-H Educational Center</b> <a href="http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/jamestown/">http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/jamestown/</a>	757/253-4931
<b>Northern Virginia 4-H Educational Center</b> <a href="http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/northern/">http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/northern/</a>	540/635-7171
<b>W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Center at Smith Mountain Lake</b> <a href="http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/smithmt/">http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/smithmt/</a>	540/721-2759
<b>Southwest Virginia 4-H Educational Center</b> <a href="http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/southwest/">http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/southwest/</a>	276/676-6180



