

Join 4-H!

Source: Deana Reed, 4-H youth development specialist

A new school year is upon us, and it's a great time to join 4-H, the nation's largest youth organization. 4-H offers experiential learning to youth ages 9 to 18 with something for all interests from insects to space to sewing. There are topics for all youths. By participating in 4-H, youths develop many essential life skills including responsibility, leadership and self-esteem.

You can get involved in 4-H several ways by participating in clubs or completing projects. Clubs provide youths a chance to practice leadership skills while making new friends. Topics vary across the state depending on local youths' interests, and range from animals to communications to financial management. From science to crafts, youths of all ages and abilities will find something that interests them in 4-H projects. By completing projects, youths not only develop new interests and hobbies but also important skills such as self-confidence, time management and critical thinking. While the deadline has passed for state fair entries this year, youths can get a jump start on next year's project by joining 4-H this month.

In addition to clubs and projects, 4-H offers numerous in-school and after-school programs for youth. 4-H youth development agents make many visits to county schools throughout the year to offer hands-on learning. Many times they reinforce subjects youth are learning in school, but they also provide information on topics such as character development, fitness and healthy eating.

After-school programs offer fun, hands-on activities for youths in a safe environment. Programs differ among communities depending on area 4-H'ers needs

and interests, but some possible subjects include healthy living, communications, family and consumer sciences, environmental and earth science, plants and animals, science and technology and leadership. By participating in any of these programs, youths learn how to set goals, make sound decisions and resolve conflicts.

4-H offers a world of opportunities for youths to explore. For more information on how youths can get involved, contact your Martin County Cooperative Extension Service.

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