


# 4-H Family Handbook



  
 PEER REVIEWED  
 01610

Family Guide to 4-H


 UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
 EXTENSION



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Graphic Design by Paula Wheeler, [www.WheelerArts.com](http://www.WheelerArts.com)

Illustrations on pages 8-9, 11-12, and 15: QuickArt © by Wheeler Arts

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To order additional copies of this handbook, visit [www.4-HMall.org](http://www.4-HMall.org).



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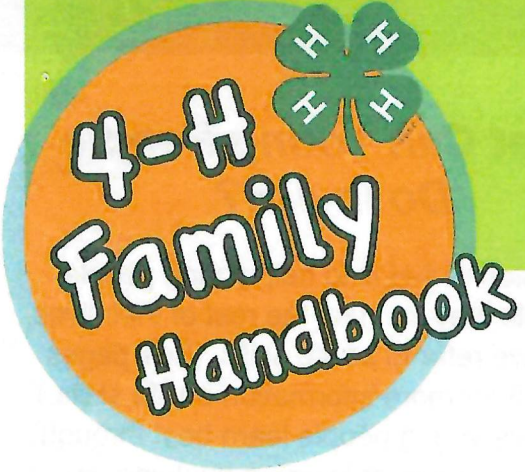
Urbana-Champaign, Illinois

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June 2016

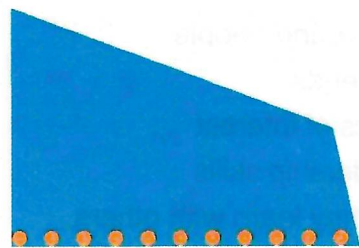
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# Welcome to 4-H

We're so glad that your child has joined 4-H. The 4-H program offers a variety of opportunities for young people. Beginning with 4-H Cloverbuds at age 5 through the teen years of middle and high school, your child can participate in projects, events, activities, competitions, workshops, and conferences. There is a lot that 4-H has to offer! This handbook will introduce you to many of those opportunities and can be your go-to guide when you need answers.



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*"We believe in learning by doing."*

## What is 4-H?

4-H makes learning fun! In 4-H clubs young people work with other youth and adult volunteers to learn new skills, practice leadership, give back to their community, and make new friends. They learn about topics that interest them through hands-on activities. *We believe in learning by doing.*

4-H members select one or more topics to learn about during the year. That includes everything from learning how to cook, build a robot, or care for the environment. These topics are referred to as members' "projects." Hundreds of projects are offered through 4-H so members can pick the ones that most interest them. Or they can find other young people with the same interest and study that topic with the help of a volunteer who shares that same interest.

**Welcome to 4-H — New 4-H Member Guide** helps new 4-H members sample a variety of 4-H projects. Members learn how to prepare simple snacks, create a windowsill garden,





care for a pet, get to know other club members, and learn about 4-H. If you are interested, ask your 4-H club leader to order a copy of the **Welcome to 4-H — New 4-H Member Guide** from [www.4-HMall.org](http://www.4-HMall.org).

To learn about the wide variety of projects offered in 4-H, ask your 4-H club leader for a catalog or list of all the available projects.

## Who Belongs to 4-H?

4-H is offered in every state. All young people can participate no matter if youth live in the country, the suburbs, or a city. Young people from all races, colors, religions, and a variety of different countries belong to 4-H. Boys and girls participate in 4-H and accommodations are made for young people with disabilities or special needs.

## Who Sponsors 4-H?

4-H is the youth development program of Extension and part of the land-grant mission of the state university.

- Clubs are led by volunteers who are screened with background checks and attend training to learn the best ways to work with young people.
- Extension staff oversee the day-to-day 4-H program management.
- Youth development educators, or agents who have expertise in positive youth development, are responsible for volunteer training and support and program oversight.

## What Can Young People Do in 4-H?

Our mission in 4-H is to help young people learn skills they can use the rest of their lives — what we refer to as life skills. (See pages 12 and 15 for more information on life skills.) We believe young people learn best through hands-on learning or learning by doing. In 4-H, your child will have many opportunities to be actively involved in learning.

4-H clubs help young people

- Make new friends
- Explore topics of interest
- Develop leadership skills
- Share what they learn with others
- Make connections to mentors, leaders, and potential employers

4-H clubs are designed to be family-friendly! To help find a club near you or one that is learning about a topic of interest, ask your local Extension office about clubs to choose from. 4-H Clubs meet in a variety of locations (such as a school, private home, library, military installation, etc.) and at various times. When joining a 4-H club, young people can choose from the following club types.

**Community Clubs** — members typically have a wide variety of interests and choose projects to explore based on their own interests. While some project work may be done during club meetings, generally members work on their projects independently. During club meetings, members plan and participate in other learning activities, service projects, and social outings. Club activities provide opportunities for members to develop and grow their leadership and communication skills.





**Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs** — members share a common interest, such as robotics, animal science, shooting sports, or cooking. During club meetings a volunteer with expertise in the topic assists members as they participate in learning activities, develop new skills, and share what they learn with others. Members experience leadership opportunities as they assist other members in project work or plan service projects related to their shared interest.

**Cloverbuds** — a group specifically for younger children ages 5–7. During meetings they work on age-appropriate projects as a group, and are encouraged to try new things. Cloverbuds can be an independent group or they may meet in a designated area at the same time as a 4-H club.

## *How Are Families Involved in 4-H?*

You will soon discover that 4-H is a family-friendly program. Family members are invited to participate in 4-H learning activities when possible. We can always use extra help during community service projects, when showing or exhibiting projects, planning for club or county events, or just making 4-H fun for everyone.

## *Does It Cost to Join 4-H?*

Each year when members enroll in 4-H, they may pay a fee to help cover the costs of the program. Some activities or events may have an additional fee to cover supplies and expenses. Some counties have funds to provide scholarships for families that need help paying the fees. Talk with the club leader or 4-H staff to request help with the fees.

## *What Does 4-H Offer?*

4-H members attend club meetings on a pre-set schedule. That could be once a week for a set amount of time, or once or twice a month. You can select a 4-H club around one topic or a club that offers multiple projects.

4-H offers hundreds of projects to choose from and most projects have a project book and resources for learning at home.

4-H members can share their completed project work. That might be entering an exhibit at the local fair or project day, showing an animal they have trained in a competitive event, or presenting a speech. In 4-H, we recognize members for their achievements.

Many clubs give back to the community through community service projects. That might include visiting and giving cards to seniors in nursing homes; volunteering for a meal-packaging event to provide meals for families in need; or collecting stuffed animals to give to children who are sick or injured.

## *What are Projects?*

In 4-H, members learn about topics that interest them. Members choose one or more topics to learn about. That includes everything from learning how to cook, build a robot, or care for the environment. These are referred to as members' "projects." Hundreds of projects are offered so members can pick the ones that most interest them. Ask your club leader for a list of the projects available to choose from.





## What is Experiential Learning?

In 4-H, we practice learning by doing. In other words, young people learn through experience. During 4-H club meetings, members will participate in learning activities. But learning doesn't stop with the activity. Young people think about what they did and what they learned — they reflect on the activity. Then they learn to apply what they have learned to life at home or school, with friends or family, and possibly for a future career.

## What Else Will Young People Learn?

When young people participate in positive youth development programs like 4-H, they have the opportunity to learn what are described as the **5 C's** — **C**ompetence, **C**onfidence, **C**haracter, **C**aring, and **C**onnection. Following are examples of how young people may demonstrate the 5 C's.

- Get along with others and make new friends
- Accept responsibility
- Respect and trust others
- Settle conflict with others
- Understand their strengths and weaknesses
- Clearly communicate thoughts and ideas
- Plan activities
- Set goals and make plans to reach them
- Work as a team player
- Demonstrate confidence
- Contribute to their community
- Help others in need
- Make healthier choices
- Develop life skills (see page 15 for more details)



# Positive It's

As they grow and learn, all young people have four developmental needs. Those needs are

- **Belonging:** To know they are cared about by others
- **Independence:** To practice responsibility and make decisions
- **Generosity:** To practice helping others through their own generosity
- **Mastery:** To feel and believe they are capable and successful

4-H helps meet these needs by providing positive youth development experiences. In 4-H, youth build skills and values, and use their skills, talents, and time in ways that make them feel confident and competent.

You may hear 4-H staff and volunteers talking about **BIG-M**. That is an easy way to remember these important developmental needs — **B**elonging, **I**ndependence, **G**enerosity, and **M**astery. These are essential needs that every child has.

## **BELONGING**

Young people want to belong and be members of groups or clubs. A sense of **belonging** may be the single most powerful positive influence 4-H adds to the lives of young people. Belonging is the "**B**" in **BIG-M**. Three elements create a strong feeling of belonging among club members.



# Youth Development —

## All about BIG-M!



**A positive relationship with a caring adult** is one of the most important ingredients of *Positive Youth Development*. Young people in clubs or groups are directly impacted by relationships with caring adults. A supportive relationship nurtures club members as they learn and helps them feel confident to try new things, tackle more difficult tasks, and set higher goals.

**An inclusive environment** acknowledges and celebrates the similarities and differences in club members. All members feel accepted and appreciated. In a welcoming environment, young people are more likely to participate and become engaged in learning activities.

**A safe emotional and physical environment** encourages positive interaction among members and teamwork.

### **INDEPENDENCE**

**Independence** is the second key ingredient of *Positive Youth Development* and the “I” in BIG-M. Independence grows by steps and begins with making small decisions that can turn into life-changing decisions. Encouragement builds young people’s self-confidence as they learn to influence people and events through decision-making and taking action. By exercising independence, youth mature in self-discipline and responsibility, learn to better understand themselves, and become independent thinkers.

### **GENEROSITY**

**Generosity** is the third ingredient of *Positive Youth Development* and the “G” in BIG-M. Generosity values and practices service to others. 4-H members are encouraged to develop and practice skills that are helpful or useful in their community. 4-H community service projects allow youth and adults to work together to help others. Community service helps youth build discipline, learn respect, value civic responsibility, and participate in real-world experiences.

### **MASTERY**

**Mastery** is the final ingredient of *Positive Youth Development* and the “M” in BIG-M. Mastery is achieved when youth build their knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and then demonstrate they can use these abilities. Self-confident youth believe they are capable because they have solved problems and met challenges.

4-H members achieve mastery through hands-on learning and by demonstrating their knowledge and skills to others.





# 4-H Facts

## 4-H Pledge

At the beginning of 4-H club meetings, members stand and recite the 4-H Pledge. By saying the 4-H Pledge as a club, members are reminded about the things we value — youth decision-making, loyalty, service to others, and healthy living. It's an important part of a club meeting and it's an important part of being a 4-H member.

### I Pledge

**My Head to Clearer Thinking,**

(Point to forehead with right hand)

**My Heart to Greater Loyalty,**

(Place right hand over heart)

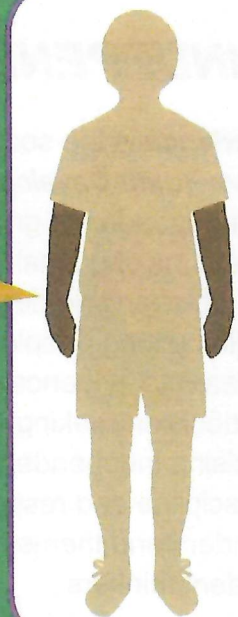
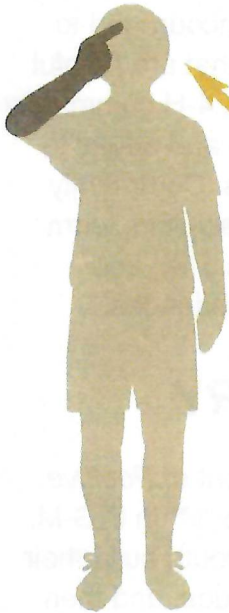
**My Hands to Larger Service,**

(Arms slightly bent with palms up)

**And My Health to Better Living,**

(Sweep bent arms down to your side)

**For My Club, My Community,  
My Country, and My World.**

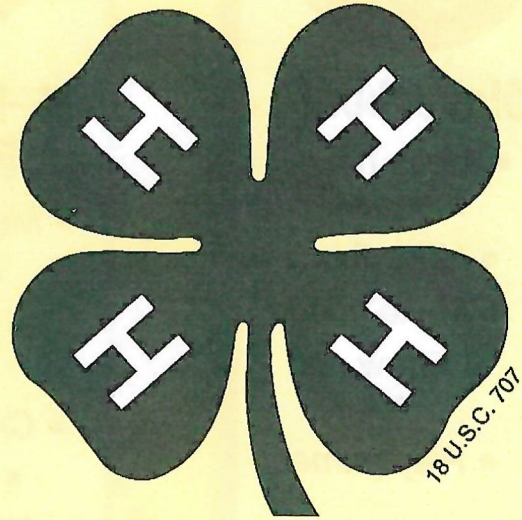
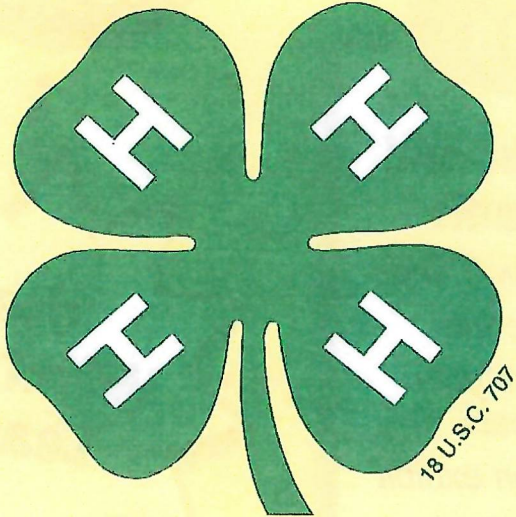






## 4-H Emblem

The 4-H emblem is a four-leaf clover with the letter "H" on each leaf. The leaves of the 4-H Clover are green or black and the letters are white.



### 4-H Motto

***"To Make the Best Better"***

### We Believe in

- ✓ Youth as leaders and decision makers
  - ✓ Learning by doing
  - ✓ Youth making a difference
  - ✓ Goal-setting to achieve growth

### 4-H Colors



Green and White



# FIND YOUR P



**Ages 5-7**

## Cloverbuds

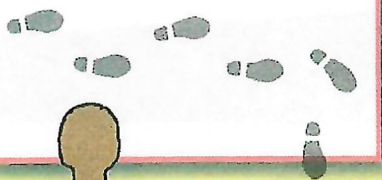
- Make new friends
- Have fun
- Make things
- Show and tell
- Play games



**Ages 8-18**

## 4-H Clubs and Programs

- Make new friends
  - Have fun
  - Explore your interests
- Create an exhibit
  - Go on tours
- Attend workshops

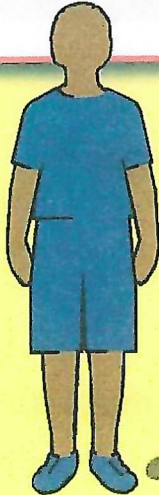
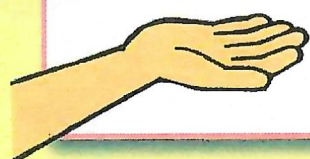


**Ages 13-18**



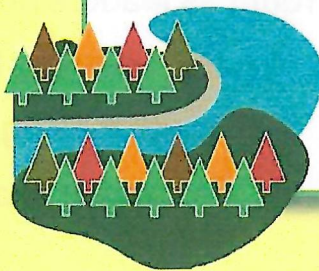
**Serve Your Community**

- Help others
- Give to others
- Plan a service activity



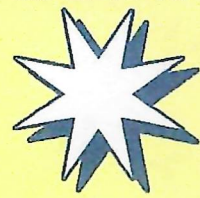
**Attend 4-H Camp**

- Gain independence
- Experience adventure and challenges
  - Make new friends
  - Try new things





# PLACE IN 4-H



DECIDE • HAVE FUN • MAKE FRIENDS • BELONG • LEAD • EXPLORE • SERVE • DECIDE

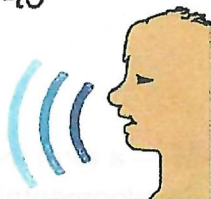
## Learn to be a Leader

- Train
- Practice
- Do



## Share What You Learn

- Show others how-to
- Give a presentation
- Compete in contests
- Exhibit projects



## Be a Leader

- Be confident
- Be competent
  - Be independent
- Share your abilities with others
- Volunteer your talents
  - Make a difference in your community and your world



Be a 4-H Teen Teacher

Mentor Younger Kids

Tell Others about 4-H

Plan Events and Activities

Improve Your Community

Work in Partnership with Others



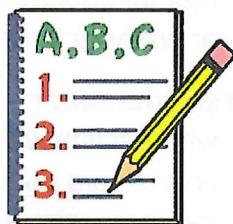
For more information on 4-H, visit the National 4-H website at [4-h.org](http://4-h.org)

## Participate in Local, State, National, and Global Events

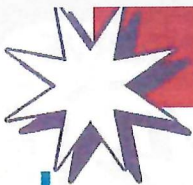


## Make Connections

- Friends
- Mentors
- Leaders
- Future employers
- Experts







# Glossary

## 4-H

**4-H** — the youth development program of Extension designed for young people ages 5–19; members participate in clubs, activities, and events and complete project work with the group or on their own



**4-H Ambassadors** — teen leaders who promote 4-H programs and encourage others to get involved

**4-H Club** — a group of young people led by screened volunteers and administered by Extension who participate in 4-H learning experiences, educational activities, and events

**4-H Foundation** — raises funds from individuals, businesses, corporations, and organizations to provide financial support for state and county 4-H programs

**4-H Member** — any youth who is enrolled in 4-H and participates in a minimum of one meeting of a 4-H club or other 4-H sponsored event or activity

**4-H Volunteer** — an adult or older youth who provides support and leadership to a 4-H club

## A

**Achievement Program** — an annual event that recognizes 4-H youth, clubs, leaders, and community partners for their achievements

**Activity Leader** — a volunteer that leads or helps coordinate a club or county 4-H activity, such as a judging contest or fundraiser

**American Income Life** — the insurance company that offers the 4-H club accident insurance and special activities coverage for accidents

**Award Application** — the form 4-H members complete to record the work they have accomplished during the past year and in prior years of club work; local and state winners are selected; awards may include medals, certificates, pins, trips, cash, etc.

## B

**BIG-M** — a term used to describe the four developmental needs of young people: *Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery*

## C

**Camp** — a day or overnight outdoor learning experience that provides fun, hands-on, real-world learning; topics may include nature study, environmental education, outdoor recreation, or water activities



**Camp Counselor** — an adult or older teen who assists with 4-H camp activities; counselors usually stay in cabins with campers, serve as mentors, and supervise campers during daily activities



**Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF)** — a trip to the nation's capital for older youth; participants learn about the government and how they can make an impact in their communities; the trip includes visits to historical monuments and important government buildings

**Cloverbuds** — youth 5–7 years old that are enrolled in 4-H; Cloverbud members participate in 4-H projects that are age appropriate; Cloverbuds can be an independent group or affiliated with a 4-H club



**Community Service Project** — a project planned by 4-H members to meet a community need



**Conference Judging** — 4-H members meet with a judge for project evaluation; the judge asks questions about what the 4-H member learned while working on the project and gives feedback to the member

**County 4-H Foundation** — a county or Extension unit group of volunteers chartered to raise funds to provide financial support for 4-H programs

**County Extension Director** — an Extension staff member responsible for program, staff, and fiscal supervision within an Extension unit; the unit may be a single county or multiple counties

## D

**Demonstration** — a presentation for a 4-H member to show and explain how to do something; many counties have public presentation contests for members to showcase what they learned in their project

**Developmentally Appropriate** — learning activities that are planned for the abilities, skills, and needs of specific age groups

## E

**Educator or Agent** — an Extension staff member with subject matter expertise; youth development educators or 4-H agents oversee the 4-H program

**Enrollment Form** — 4-H members complete this form annually; the form collects contact information and other information required for reports, such as age, gender, and race or ethnicity; this form is required for all 4-H members and volunteers who work directly with youth

**Event** — an educational or social occasion scheduled at a particular place and time

**Exhibit** — a completed project, trained animal, or presentation prepared for evaluation or display at a county fair, contest, or competition

**Exhibit Opportunity** — an opportunity for 4-H members to display their completed projects or performances; judges evaluate the projects and award ribbons or trophies based on the quality of the work



**Experiential Learning** — the learning process that engages participants in hands-on learning activities; after the learning activity, young people reflect on what they experienced and learned and think about how to apply what they learned to real-world situations

**Extension Council** — the Extension Council assists Extension staff to determine the program priorities for local 4-H and Extension programs; the council is made up of local volunteers with a variety of backgrounds and expertise

**Extension Office or Unit** — one or more counties that work together to provide Extension programming to local citizens and youth

**Extension Program Coordinator or Assistant** — Extension staff member who teams with other Extension staff and volunteers to plan, conduct, and evaluate local 4-H youth development programs, activities, and events

## F

**Fair** — an opportunity for 4-H members to display their completed projects or performances; judges evaluate the projects and award ribbons or trophies based on the quality of the work



**Federation** — a group of 4-H members that assist local Extension staff with planning and carrying out 4-H events and activities; Federation members serve as a communication link between 4-H clubs and Extension staff

## J

**Judging Contests** — a learning experience for youth to identify and/or judge quality of products, livestock, or project work

**Junior Leader** — an older 4-H member who assists adult volunteers in carrying out club responsibilities or teaching other members

## L

**Land Grant University** — the university designated by Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, which provided for college education for the working classes

**Learn-by-Doing** — 4-H practice of hands-on or experiential learning

**Life Skills** — abilities youth learn to help them live successful, productive lives; 4-H youth programs provide learning opportunities for young people to gain life skills, practice them, and use them throughout their lives (see page 15 for more details)

Use What  
You Learn

Mak

Learn to be  
a Leader



## N

**National 4-H Conference** — the Secretary of Agriculture holds this annual event in Washington, D.C. for 4-H youth, volunteers, and staff to discuss issues affecting youth

**National 4-H Congress** — state 4-H award winners apply to attend this annual conference in Atlanta, GA

**National 4-H Week** — the first full week of October annually; current 4-H youth and leaders are recognized and new 4-H opportunities are promoted in local communities

**National Youth Science Day (NYSD)** — during National 4-H Week, 4-H members conduct and investigate scientific experiments provided by National 4-H Council

## O

**Organizational Leader** — a volunteer who is the main contact for the 4-H club and responsible for enrolling members, ordering 4-H project books, communicating with the local Extension office, and coordinating 4-H club meetings

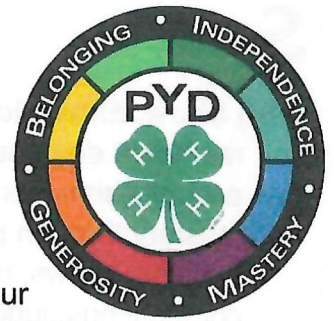
## P

### Positive Youth

#### Development

— supports the growth and development of youth through four developmental needs:

Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery, also known as BIG-M



**Project** — a developmentally appropriate series of hands-on learning activities which help youth reach their learning goals

**Project Leader** — a volunteer that has expertise in a project area and helps 4-H members learn and master skills for that project

**Project Planning Guide** — a form 4-H'ers use to plan what they want to learn and the skills they want to master

**Public Speaking Contest** — competitive event for 4-H members presenting speeches or demonstrations on a variety of topics; members may advance to the state competition

## R

**Recognition** — a 4-H program that allows all members an opportunity to be recognized for their participation, experiences, or competition

## Connections

Participate in  
Local, State, National,  
and Global Events

Share What You Learn



## S

**(4-H) Show, Exhibition, Fair** — 4-H members demonstrate their project accomplishments and mastery through project exhibits, shows, or competitions; judges with expertise in the project area evaluate the projects; ribbons, trophies, and other awards are presented to the members based on the quality of their 4-H work



**SPIN (SPecial Interest) Clubs** —

youth with a common interest or hobby join a SPIN club to explore the topic, for example, robotics, shooting sports, sailing, food preparation, or dog agility



**State Fair** — an annual competitive and social event to showcase a state; 4-H members are selected to exhibit outstanding 4-H projects, including livestock projects

## T

**Teen Teachers** — older youth who volunteer their time to teach younger youth in clubs and groups



## U

**University Extension** — provides practical, research-based information and programs to help individuals, families, farms, businesses and communities; its mission is to help citizens put knowledge to work; Extension offers educational programs in energy & environmental stewardship, food safety & security, economic development & workforce preparedness, family health, financial security & wellness, and youth development

## V

**Volunteer Screening** — an Extension process to prevent child abuse and neglect and to protect youth in the 4-H program; volunteers who will work with young people in the 4-H program may be asked to complete the screening process

## Y

**Youth Volunteers** — youth age 19 or younger who volunteer their time to support 4-H programs



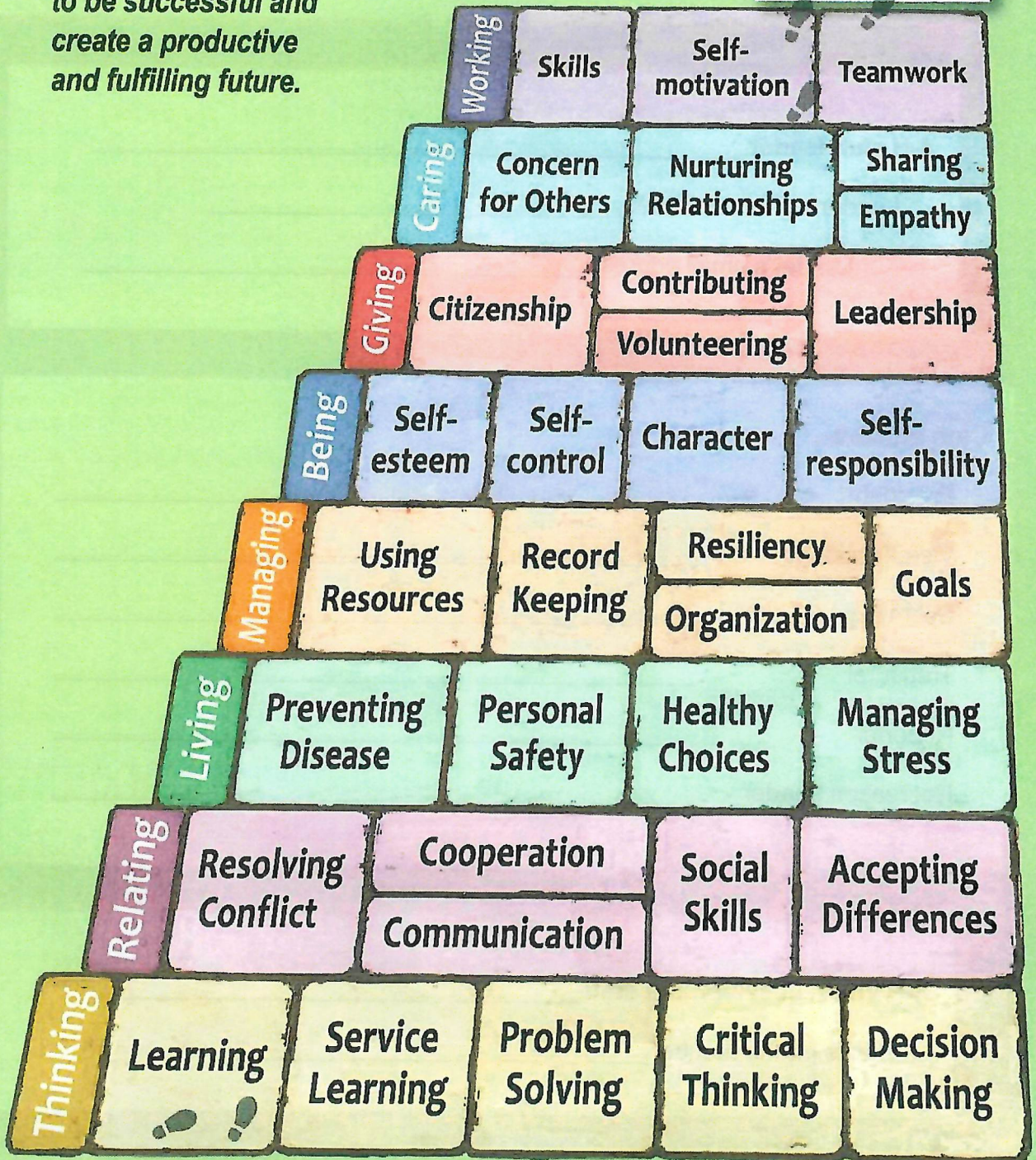


# 4-H'ERS BUILD LIFE SKILLS



4-H programs provide learning opportunities for young people to build life skills, practice them, and use them throughout their lives.

Life skills help young people to be successful and create a productive and fulfilling future.





# 4-H Club



**Name of 4-H club** \_\_\_\_\_

The club meets at (where) \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting time and date \_\_\_\_\_

**4-H club leader** \_\_\_\_\_

Leader's phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Leader's email address \_\_\_\_\_

## Club officers

President \_\_\_\_\_

Vice-President \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter \_\_\_\_\_

Recreation Leader \_\_\_\_\_

**4-H youth development staff** \_\_\_\_\_

Staff's phone number \_\_\_\_\_