

# What is 4-H? Positive Youth Development

4-H learning experiences are based on the principles and practices of positive. Positive youth development views young people as vital resources with assets and potentials to be developed rather than as problems to be managed.

Eight essential elements of positive youth development settings were identified from the research of the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine in 2002. This important national undertaking to identify necessary features to foster healthy youth development across environments has provided an important framework for all systems that influence youth, including families, youth programs, schools, community organizations, government organizations and others, to assist them to intentionally create opportunities to help youth successfully reach developmental milestones in adolescence.

The 4-H program nationally has adopted a list of eight critical elements that are often summarized into four essential concepts that align with the 4-H Pledge and are considered necessary attributes of youth programs striving to create environments conducive to optimizing youth development.

<b>8 Essential Elements Distilled to 4 Essential Concepts</b>	
<p><b>BELONGING</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive relationships with a caring adult</li> <li>2. An inclusive environment</li> <li>3. A safe environment</li> </ol>	<p><b>MASTERY</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Engagement in learning</li> <li>5. Opportunity for mastery</li> </ol>
<p><b>INDEPENDENCE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future</li> <li>7. Opportunity for self-determination</li> </ol>	<p><b>GENEROSITY</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Opportunity to value and practice service to others</li> </ol>

## **I pledge my HEAD to clearer thinking...**

Opportunities for INDEPENDENCE

- Through 4-H leadership opportunities, youth mature in self-discipline and responsibility, learn to better understand themselves, and become independent thinkers.
- Youth need to know they can influence people and events through decision-making and action.

## **I pledge my HEART to greater loyalty...**

Opportunities for BELONGING

- Current research emphasizes the importance for youth to have opportunities for long-term, consistent relationships with peers and adults other than parents.
- Youth need to know they are cared about by others and feel a sense of connection to others in the group. 4-H gives opportunities to feel physically and emotionally safe while actively participating in a group.

## **I pledge my HANDS to larger service...**

Opportunities for GENEROSITY

- By participating in community service and citizenship activities, youth connect to communities and learn to give back.
- Youth need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose.

**I pledge my HEALTH to better living...**

Opportunities for MASTERY

- By exploring 4-H projects and activities, youth master skills to make positive life and career choices.
- Youth need to know they can influence people and events through decision-making and action.

**. . .For my club, my community, my county, and my world.**