

# Eight Key Elements of Positive Youth Development

## **Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult**

How young people understand what it means and what it takes to be a productive citizen, as well as the belief in themselves, depends largely on the adult role models and connections they have. A 4-H caring adult volunteer serves as a guide, mentor, and role model. The 4-H caring adult helps set appropriate boundaries and expectations.

## **A Safe Environment - Emotional and Physical**

4-H youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in the 4-H experience, whether from the learning environment itself, adults, other participants, or spectators.

## **Opportunity for Mastery**

These are opportunities for success and achievement for our 4-H members. Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and then demonstrating the competent use of this knowledge and skill. Through hands-on 4-H projects and activities, youth gain new knowledge and have the opportunity to immediately apply that new knowledge to individual projects and activities in which they are engaged. Furthermore, the development of mastery is a process that occurs over time and is increased with repetition.

## **Opportunity to Value and Practice Service**

Service is a way for 4-H members to gain exposure to the larger community and the world. It is necessary to actively practice and treasure service. Service is more than a product; it is a process that provides developmental opportunities for 4-H members.

## **Opportunity for Self-Determination**

Our 4-H youth must believe that they can have impact over life's events, rather than life's events having control of their lives. We must help our 4-H youth foster that personal sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing, autonomous adults.

## **Welcoming Environment**

A welcoming environment is one that allows for a sense of belonging to develop, encourages and supports its members, and offers encouragement with positive and specific feedback. Healthy 4-H groups celebrate the success of all members – taking pride in the collective efforts of all.

## **To be an Active Participant in the Future**

To provide 4-H members the opportunity to see themselves in the future gives them the hope and optimism to shape their life choices accordingly. We can teach all the facts and figures we want, but if we don't link them to their future, those facts and figures may go unused.

## **Engagement in Learning**

An engaged 4-H youth is one who is not only mindful of the subject area, but building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding. Through self-reflection, the 4-H youth's brain has the ability to learn from experience. The engaged 4-H youth has a higher degree of self-motivation and an inexhaustible capacity to create.

