4-H Clubs

One of the most exciting, yet challenging, changes in Alabama 4-H is the increased emphasis on community ownership of 4-H clubs and the increased role of volunteers in leading clubs. Highly trained parents, teachers, retirees, and other volunteer leaders enrich and expand the critical presence that caring, committed adults have in young people’s lives. Four-H offers in-school clubs, community clubs and project clubs, which specialize in areas such as the environment, pets, or rocketry.

Special Interest Programs

In these programs, groups of youth meet for a special learning experience, involving direct instruction by teachers or other trained 4-H volunteers or by Extension staff. They might involve a field trip to learn about health careers, a seminar on farm or home safety, the development of a community garden in conjunction with Master Gardeners, or hundreds of other potential projects.
4-H Camps & Conferences
Youth take part in a planned educational experience of group living in the outdoors, which includes being away from home at least one night (resident, primitive, or travel camping). The programs have an educational component on such topics as teamwork or environmental education.

4-H Individual Study
These programs include planned learning that occurs outside of a formal group setting such as a club. They are individual, paired, or family learning efforts and are generally self-directed, with limited adult involvement. Examples include self-study and home study courses as well as mentoring or shadowing with an expert in a particular field. Whole families may work on a project or activity together.

4-H Technology Programs
One of the greatest areas for improving the quality and quantity of 4-H learning is through new technology. Young people can be offered learning experiences through broadcast or closed circuit television, videotapes, DVDs, the World Wide Web, and CD-ROMs.
What Are Our Future Directions?

As an organization that responds to young people's changing needs, 4-H is constantly seeking new and better ways to reach kids. Historically, Alabama 4-H has been identified with in-school clubs directed by Extension staff. We are undertaking major enhancements in how we reach youth and what we provide to them. These changes include expanding our corps of highly trained volunteers, the enlargement and improvement of our school enrichment programs, and an increased involvement of families and communities in the leadership of 4-H clubs.

Why Adult Volunteer Delivery?

• Adults teach the values of service and community involvement through volunteering.
• The energy of youth is tempered by adult experience, which builds self-esteem, self-confidence, and responsibility.
• Youth and adults share concern about issues that affect their community and the world.
• The partnering across generations builds meaningful relationships that make a difference.

Adult volunteering also encourages family involvement in activities, programs, and projects so the entire family is learning and living together.
4-H School Enrichment

The partnership between 4-H and the schools is a key link in Extension’s mission to “take research-based knowledge and education from the land-grant universities to people in counties throughout Alabama who need it.”

Four-H is the perfect partner in providing effective, high-quality programs for young people during school through our budding Four-H Discovery approach to school enrichment. Four-H programs complement and supplement academic education in many areas, from leadership education to character development. Four-H offers support in supplementary areas, such as public speaking and career planning, which the schools would otherwise be unable to offer.

4-H After School

Four-H is involved for crucial reasons with young people in programs adjunct to formal classroom activities. Currently, many youth are left unsupervised or with only minimal supervision outside school hours. Fewer schools offer school-day programs in such nonacademic subjects as public speaking, leadership development, animal sciences, and visual and performing arts. Four-H can fill these deficiencies by providing such activities as the following:

- Before and after-school programs
- Extended day kindergarten for students beyond the regular half day
- Saturday and weekend programs that provide instructional activities
- Summer programs
- Intersession programs that students attend during academic breaks

An important purpose of these programs is to provide shelter, safety, and supervision for young people while parents are working or unavailable.
Helping youth realize their full potential in becoming effective, contributing citizens is the goal of the nationwide 4-H program. With research-based, informal, hands-on educational experiences, 4-H helps children and young people become responsible and productive citizens in their communities. Four-H creates supportive environments where youth gain knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes to become outstanding leaders among their peers. Four-H also supports adult volunteers who give of themselves to help create better futures for tomorrow’s leaders.

What Is 4-H?

• Alabama 4-H is the youth development program of Auburn and Alabama A&M Universities. It is delivered through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System offices across the state.
• Four-H is an educational program that provides organized, structured, and directed learning opportunities for youth to become leaders.
• Four-H serves more than 110,000 youth in Alabama through research-based, educational activities.
• Four-H provides youth, ages five to nineteen, from all economic and social backgrounds with leadership opportunities through participating in hands-on educational experiences, research projects, and group events.
• More than 5,000 adults annually volunteer to assist in delivering 4-H programs in Alabama.
• Programs range from traditional agricultural and farm development programs to character building programs in schools to computer and technology programs run at community-based after-school centers.

The four Hs—head, heart, hands, and health—teach leadership skills to children and young people so they can become tomorrow’s leaders.
The story of 4-H in Alabama is not about programs, clubs, and activities; it is the story of kids whose lives are shaped by the hands-on/minds-on learning at the core of 4-H. We do develop the heads, hearts, hands, and health of Alabama youth. Alabama 4-H is an innovative, responsive leader in developing Alabama’s young people to become productive citizens and leaders in a complex and dynamic society.

For nearly 100 years, 4-H has created leaders! In its beginning, 4-H created agricultural leaders from organized corn- and tomato-growing clubs. Today, through its affiliation with land-grant universities, 4-H continues to create leaders through rural, suburban, and urban community-based clubs. Four-H can lead the way to a kinder and better educated society, a more prepared workforce, a responsible citizenship, and a better tomorrow.

In leading the way to a better tomorrow, 4-H has evolved into the premier youth development organization in the country. Four-H has kept in step with the great societal changes and scientific advances of the twentieth century. Today 4-H offers young people access to many areas of interest. From music to environmental education to space camps, today’s youth can name almost anything they want to discover and 4-H will open the gate to their educational journey.
More than 110,000 young people in Alabama annually embark on this journey. Under the leadership of 4-H agents and adult volunteer leaders, young people are gaining knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes in 4-H. Through a wide variety of programs delivered at the 4-H Youth Development Center, youth annually interact with other young people in a setting that promotes learning how to live, work, and play together.

Today, 4-H Youth Development has Extension faculty from Auburn and Alabama A&M Universities, the state’s two land-grant institutions, who can access the nation’s leading researchers in wireless communications, biotechnology, engineering, chemistry, agriculture, forestry, environmental sciences, and more. The combination of this knowledge base and the sincerity, dedication, and hard work of the adult volunteers can give parents the satisfaction of knowing that their 4-H'ers are in good hands.

In Alabama, one of every four people is a 4-H alumnus and a leader! Alabama 4-H leaders include United States Senators, entertainment personalities, artists, state representatives and senators, presidents of several Alabama companies, lawyers, teachers, soldiers, doctors, farmers, executives, Extension faculty, entrepreneurs, and more. Many alumni continue their involvement in 4-H by welcoming 4-H in their workplaces, volunteering in local 4-H clubs, serving on educational and 4-H advisory boards, and supporting 4-H as a philanthropic priority.
What Do We Teach?

Alabama 4-H helps young people develop life skills that include making decisions, thinking critically, building relationships, exercising leadership, and developing a concern for the community and the environment. Four-H provides learning opportunities in eight crucial areas:

- Citizenship and Civic Education
- Communicative and Expressive Arts
- Family and Consumer Science
- Environmental Education and Natural Resources
- Healthy Lifestyle Education
- Personal Development and Leadership
- Plant and Animal Sciences
- Science and Technology

We offer youth a variety of learning experiences within their communities and within the larger world. We strive to make every aspect of 4-H programs and activities interesting and beneficial to successfully attract and retain youth participation. Young people are engaged in hands-on/minds-on opportunities to learn in environments that are experiential, meaningful, inspiring, and fun.
What Are the Needs of Alabama’s Youth?

With the involvement of caring, committed adults, there is no limit to what Alabama’s young people can achieve. Share your time. Share your energy. Share your resources. By doing so, you help build the future for our youth and our state. Through your example, you serve as a guide and a mentor. Through your involvement, you help build a strong foundation. Through your financial support, you provide the experiences, the tools, and the lessons that are required for them to grow and thrive. Please be involved. Our young people need you. An outstanding educator recently acknowledged, “All kids are wealthy in terms of their potential. The kids we raise today will determine the generations of tomorrow.”