

## 4-H = Life Skills

We often talk about 4-H teaching life skills to youth but what exactly does that mean?

It means the very practical skills of caring for ourselves and others by learning through projects such as Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, and Health. It means practicing being able to read a basic recipe, buy groceries, and make healthy food decisions. Am I going to sew my own suits these days – No – but I do know how with many thanks to my own 4-H leaders. What is more important is that a youth learns to repair a hem or sew on a button and knows how to care for their clothing so that it lasts.

Life Skills also means having a need for curiosity and learning. Projects like entomology, forestry, photography, and visual arts encourage life-long learning and, in many cases, can lead to jobs in agriculture, education, and many other areas.

An important aspect of 4-H Life Skills is decision making! Through judging opportunities, participation in their clubs, and interactions at a wide variety of events, 4-H members have the opportunity to make decisions and have feedback on how effective that decision was. These are definitely learning opportunities as they won't always make the wisest decision – that comes with time and experience!

Have you ever heard the phrase “another meeting that could have been handled through an email?” Learning parliamentary procedure is a definite life skill for 4-H members and is applicable for their future in business meetings, civic board and committee meetings, as well as governmental service.

So how do we teach these life skills in 4-H? We use project learning, such as the ones already noted, as well as club meetings, workshops and day camps which give youth a chance to try out new skills and continue to increase their knowledge of a topic. All the while they are learning to communicate effectively, learning the

value of involvement in their community, and practicing decision making. These are important life skills to help our communities not just survive, but to thrive!

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