

Farm Bureau Article: February, 2012
Advances in Youth Development

Dear Lynn,

My daughter recently joined 4-H in Santa Cruz County and our community club leader refers to the program as the 4-H Youth Development Program. Can you tell me about the youth development component of 4-H?

Sincerely, Lucy Learning

Dear Lucy Learning,

One can define 'youth development' as: "...the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded, and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives" (Pittman, 1993, p. 8). In the context of 4-H, we use projects, events, programs and opportunities as the point of engagement for youth to acquire the necessary and positive attributes needed for their development.

In the California 4-H Youth Development Program, Youth Development Advisors (academics) conduct applied research on a variety of youth development topics. The 4-H community club members and volunteers participate in this research, which is then extended to the larger community and helps to inform best practices and policy development.

In the fall of 2011, the 4-H Youth Development Program published "*Advances in Youth Development, Research and Evaluation from the University of California Cooperative Extension 2001-2010*", an on-line publication <http://www.ca4h.org/Research/CYD/Publications/> featuring eleven articles written by California 4-H Youth Development academics. The book starts with four papers that contribute to youth development research. Following this, four articles are presented that evaluate various 4-H youth development programs. Finally, the volume ends with three articles on evaluations of program resources for staff and volunteer development. Chapters four and ten will be of particular interest to the residents of Santa Cruz County as the research for these chapters was conducted locally.

To learn more about the Youth Development component of 4-H, contact the Santa Cruz County Youth Development Advisor Lynn Schmitt-McQuitty at 831-763-8026, lschmittmcquitty@ucdavis.edu