

4-H is Healthy For You!

By

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According to recent findings from Tufts University, 4-H youth are engaging in positive healthy living behaviors more often than youth who do not participate in 4-H. According to the study, 4-Hers, regardless of their background, socio-economic status, race, and gender, thrive through the health/safety education and experiences they receive through 4-H programming.

This research study has found that, when compared to other youth, young people involved in 4-H are:

- More likely to spend more time exercising or being physically active;
- Two times less likely to engage in drug use;
- Two times less likely to use cigarettes or drink alcohol.

Dr. Richard Lerner, who conducted this research study, stated, "The results of this longitudinal study continually reinforce the idea that when youth participate in programs such as 4-H, they thrive in numerous ways including health, positive development, and community contribution." He went on to add, "The comparisons we've made between 4-H youth and other young people highlight the considerable strengths and health of the young men and young women participating in 4-H around the country."

4-H is a community of six million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. Sponsored by the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, 4-H is in all sixty-seven counties across the state of Florida, just as it is in every state in the United States. 4-H programs

are implemented by the 109 land-grant universities and the Cooperative Extension System through their 3,100 local Extension offices across the country.

The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development is a longitudinal study which began in 2002, through the support of National 4-H Council. Youth development scholar, Dr. Richard Lerner, worked with researchers at the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University to conduct the study. Youth are measured in waves across time which compared those that participate in 4-H to those that do not. The study is currently in wave seven. The 6,400 adolescents surveyed are racially and geographically diverse representing 34 states in the nation. For more information about the study visit www.4-h.org.

In summary, the results of the study showed overwhelmingly that 4-H youth are healthier in every way than those who do not participate in the program. With 4-Hers less likely to smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs, this is a program in which I would want my child (or children) to become involved. Call the Hardee County Extension Office at 863-773-2164 for more details about the 4-H program and how to join!