V.I.P. Facts
Facts for Very Important People
4-H Leaders and Penn State Extension Volunteers

Mission and Philosophy of 4-H and Youth Programs
Helping young people become self-directed, productive, and contributing members of a diverse society.

- Nonformal
- Volunteer-led
- Group experience
- Ages 5-18
- Experiential
- Sequential, research-based learning

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT VISION
A world in which youth and adults learn, grow, and work together as catalysts for positive change.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MISSION
4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

4-H MISSION MANDATES

Citizenship
Since its inception, 4-H has placed emphasis on the importance of young people being engaged, well-informed citizens. By connecting to their communities and community leaders, youth understand their role in civic affairs and expand their role in decision making processes. It’s clear that civic engagement provides the foundation that helps youth understand the “big picture” of life and find purpose and meaning. The core areas of Citizenship are:

- Civic Engagement (voice, advocacy, activism)
- Service (community service, service learning, community youth development)
- Civic Education (government principles, processes and structure; personal roles & responsibilities, history & cultural heritage)
- Leadership (leadership, respect, understanding, character development)
- Citizenship is interwoven into learning experiences through opportunities to engage with the community and through building relationships with both youth and adults from diverse backgrounds.
**Healthy Living**
Healthy food and nutrition has been addressed by the program since its inception in 1902. Having a long history of promoting healthy living among youth and their families, 4-H has become a national leader in health-related education. The 4-H Healthy Living Mission Mandate engages youth and families through access and opportunities to achieve optimal physical, social, and emotional well-being. The core areas of Healthy living are:

- Nutrition
- Fitness
- Social-Emotional Health
- Prevention of Injuries
- Prevention of Tobacco, Alcohol, and other Drug Use

Healthy living is interwoven into learning experiences through opportunities to make decisions that lead to positive well-being for the individual and the community in which they live.

**Science**
The need for science, engineering, and technology education is essential for today’s young people. 4-H programs prepare youth for the challenges of the 21st century by engaging them in a process of discovery and exploration. The core areas of Science are:

- Animal Science & Agriculture
- Applied Mathematics
- Consumer Science
- Engineering
- Environmental Science & Natural Resources
- Life Science
- Technology

Science is interwoven into learning experiences through inquiry based opportunities that connect knowledge, skills, and resources to practical application across multiple settings.

These three mission mandates – citizenship, healthy living, and science – all intertwine and can be integrated across project areas and activities. The content development of the mission mandates is closely tied to the research and teaching of the land grant university system, and provides the educational foundation of 4-H.

**4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT—EIGHT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

1. **A positive relationship with a caring adult.**
   A caring adult acts as an advisor, guide, and mentor. The adult helps set boundaries and expectations for young people. The adult could be called supporter, friend, and advocate.

2. **A safe environment – physically and emotionally.**
   Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in a 4-H experience whether from the learning environment itself, adults, other participants or spectators.
3. Opportunity for Mastery.
Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills and attitudes and then demonstrating the competent use of this knowledge and skills in the manner of a proficient practitioner. The level of mastery is dependent on the developmental ability of the individual child or youth. The development of mastery is a process over time.

4. Opportunity to value and practice service for others.
Finding one’s self begins with losing yourself in the service of others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community, indeed the world itself.

5. Opportunity for Self-Determination.
Believing that you have impact over life’s events rather than passively submitting to the will and whims of others is self-determination. Youth must exercise a sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing, autonomous adults.

6. An inclusive environment (encouragement, affirming, belonging).
An inclusive environment is one that creates a sense of belonging, encourages and supports its members with positive and specific feedback. Healthy groups celebrate the success of all members - taking pride in the collective efforts of all.

7. Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future.
The ability to see oneself in the future is to harness the hope and optimism to shape life choices to facilitate the transition into participating in the future.

8. Engagement in Learning.
An engaged youth is one who is mindful of the subject area, building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding. Through self-reflection, youth have the ability to self-correct and learn from experience. The engaged learner has a higher degree of self-motivation and an inexhaustible capacity to create.