

Wisconsin 4-H Volunteers: Volunteer Benefits



"4-H has taught me many valuable skills in management, communication, leadership and more. Volunteering has given me confidence in myself."

--Wisconsin 4-H volunteer

In 2009, Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development community clubs served over 36,600 youth around the state; the number of youth participants in 4-H and other Cooperative Extension programs totaled 320,977. Over 17,400 volunteers have supported 4-H by providing educational opportunities and activities, teaching, and mentoring youth. In 2008, the North Central Region 4-H volunteer specialists developed a survey to collect regional and state data about 4-H volunteers. The study collected demographic data but also asked about personal experiences and feelings about volunteering with 4-H. Volunteers surveyed responded that volunteering with Wisconsin 4-H contributed to personal growth and enrichment, and three volunteers spoke more in-depth about how Wisconsin 4-H has impacted their lives.

Wisconsin volunteers reported three major impacts from their experiences with 4-H. Forty percent of volunteers said they valued being more involved with youth, including the chance to learn about youth, teach them new skills and confidence and spend more time with their own children. For 35 percent of volunteers, working with 4-H contributed to their sense of community and social capital; these volunteers were able to build new personal friendships, strengthen their families and give back to the 4-H organization. Other volunteers found their experiences contributed to their personal growth; nearly a quarter of volunteers said they gained new skills in public speaking, leadership and organization while developing more confidence.

- Glen Viste has volunteered in Door County for 12 years. He was motivated to volunteer when his daughters joined 4-H. "It was a way of, intentionally or unintentionally, being more a part of their lives and enjoying things with them," he said. "Supporting my kids throughout their 4-H careers has kept us close and opened up good communication between us."



Volunteering with 4-H also helped improve Glen's work experience. "One of the greatest things I learned through 4-H is how to run a quality

meeting,” he said. “Learning to be comfortable speaking in front of groups was also important.” Because of his 4-H volunteer hours, Glen’s company recognized him as Volunteer of the Year.

- Gloria Lukes, from Lincoln County, has volunteered with 4-H for 12 years. She found her experience contributed to her personal enrichment through lasting friendships with others in 4-H. “4-H has been an opportunity to meet people from other states,” she said. “I’ve made so many friends from all across the country.”

Her volunteer experience also led to many strong friendships with youth she helped along the way. “To this day, I still hear from young people I met and worked with,” Gloria said. “It’s very nice to see how they’ve grown and hear about their awards and accomplishments.”

- Rachel Hoffman, from Price County, has volunteered with 4-H for 13 years—and was a member for 13 years as a youth. She originally started volunteering to be able to give back to the organization, but she found her experience helped her grow in her professional life, as well. “As a teacher, I work with youth all the time,” she said. “4-H has helped me connect to my work experiences and makes me much more empathetic in the classroom.”



Each Wisconsin 4-H volunteer brings special skills and expertise to their work, helping 4-H Youth Development provide quality programming to youth in more areas. Volunteers involved with 4-H in Wisconsin devote time and energy to the program, but they gain just as much as the youth they serve – new skills, stronger confidence, diverse friendships and a sense of belonging to the statewide community.

“4-H gives me an opportunity to interact with members of my community I might not otherwise meet. Our activities impact the community in a positive way.”

*--Wisconsin 4-H
volunteer*

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To see the full volunteer report, visit: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/resources/mgt/documents/WIVolunteerContributionReport11409final.pdf>

