

Wisconsin 4-H Volunteers: Impacts on Youth



"The impact I feel I have on the children is to teach them to respect others' needs as well as their own and to live by the 4-H motto."

--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 through 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 volunteers to discuss their work with youth. Volunteers surveyed responded that they helped 4-H youth cultivate new skills, build confidence and encourage excitement for learning.

Wisconsin volunteers contribute an average of \$41 on supplies and spend around eight hours a month volunteering, but most volunteers consider their effect on youth to be the most important

contribution. Half of the volunteers surveyed said the youth they worked with gained skills in leadership, organization and persistence. Youth also developed new social skills and friendships as well as stronger community connections. One volunteer surveyed said, "I have been able to teach youth many life skills related to planning, accomplishing goals, leadership and community service."

- Rachel Hoffman, from Price County, has volunteered with 4-H for 13 years. She feels that, through her work in market animal projects, she has helped youth become more excited to learn and more comfortable expressing themselves. "I think I've done a good job creating a safe place for kids in my community to learn new things," she said. "I have watched them become so much more enthusiastic about learning."

Rachel created an interactive game to teach youth about market swine: "I watch kids label the parts of a pig, and when they put the body parts in interesting places, I see they're not afraid to make some mistakes and learn from them."





- Gloria Lukes volunteered in Lincoln County for 12 years, and she found her greatest impact was as a respected role model. “When my daughter was in 4-H, we would have kids over all the time,” she said. “I was the adult young people could come to with questions, and I enjoyed talking with them about whatever they needed.”
- Glen Viste, a 12-year volunteer from Door County, feels his contributions have helped improve youth-adult partnerships. “I’ve seen youth realize that they can work as equals with adults,” he said, “that it’s not only the adult’s ideas that need to be taken into account.”

Glen noticed youth gaining confidence when he helped coordinate the North Central Regional Volunteer Forum in 2007. “We worked with youth as partners for the whole

endeavor, planning a huge, multi-state conference,” he said. “It was gratifying to see the youth realizing their ideas were important and valuable, and making sure their opinions were voiced.”

Each Wisconsin 4-H volunteer brings special skills and expertise to their work, helping 4-H Youth Development educators provide quality programming to youth in more areas. Volunteers involved with 4-H in Wisconsin devote time and energy to the program, and their impacts – from increased confidence to strengthened communication skills to new talents and interests – are visible on the youth they work with.

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For more information, contact:

Sue Pleskac
Volunteer Leadership Specialist
(715) 485-3254
sue.pleskac@ces.uwex.edu

To see the full volunteer report, visit:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/resources/mgt/documents/WIVolunteerContributionReport11409final.pdf>

