

Wisconsin 4-H Impact Report

2023



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



Letter from the Director

The 4-H program is growing and thriving throughout Wisconsin

because of the dedication of volunteers, partners, community advocates, staff, and families. In 2022–23, the program saw a statewide membership increase of 8.2 percent! Today, over 26,000 young people are exploring their passions, meeting new friends, and using their unique voices to make their clubs, community, country, and world a better place.

The promise of 4-H is to provide all young people a place to belong, a chance to experience positive relationships with others, and an opportunity to explore their interests — something we call “sparks” in the 4-H world. In order to fulfill this promise, 4-H clubs must reflect the current interests of and communities which young people call home. Barriers to participation in 4-H must be addressed to support the many different lives that youth lead throughout the entire state of Wisconsin.

In the pages that follow, you’ll be introduced to a tiny sliver of the breadth and depth of the Wisconsin 4-H program. From community clubs to the expanding classroom and after-school clubs of Wisconsin 4-H, more and more young people can see themselves as part of this growing and thriving program.

The 4-H program is over 100 years old. Throughout the generations it continues to grow like a beautiful, strong oak tree. Its core, or heartwood, was formed decades ago through meeting the needs of rural youth throughout the country. That core continues to give the program its strength and fortitude. As the tree of 4-H grows, it adds on a ring every year. These layers of growth have allowed all young people to see themselves in 4-H — those who are interested in the arts or sciences; those who participate in suburban and urban areas; those who find belonging in state and national 4-H experiences; and those who are part of 4-H through school and other community youth organizations.

It is our responsibility to grow the 4-H tree and add layers of opportunities, so more and more young people can belong and be served by this great organization. The opportunity of 4-H membership is for every single child. It is our obligation to make that possible.

With tremendous gratitude for you,

JESSICA J. JENS

*Wisconsin 4-H State Program Leader
and Interim Positive Youth Development
Institute Director*



Extension

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Wisconsin 4-H

BY THE NUMBERS

Meeting Youth Where They Live



29.4%
farm



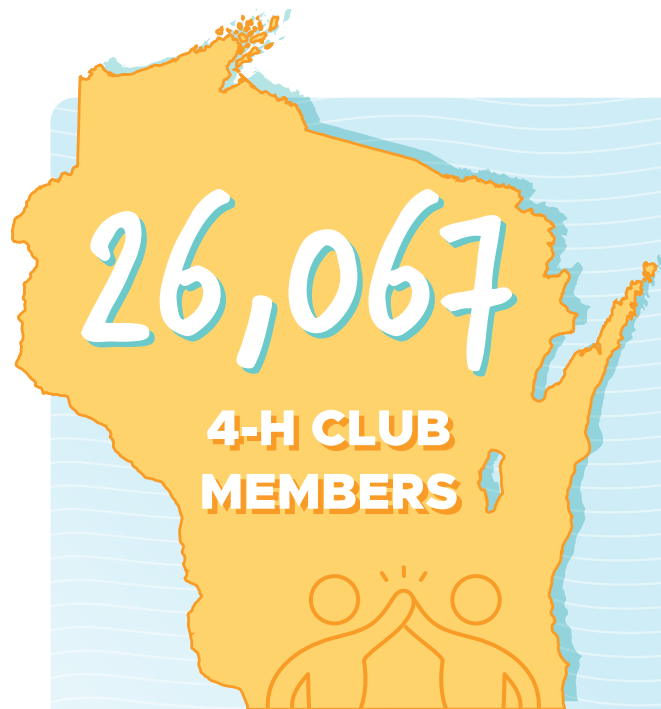
52.7%
10,000 or less
population



13%
10,000–50,000
population



4.9%
50,000+
population



8.2% increase

in membership from
the previous year



1,108

4-H clubs
and groups



5,654

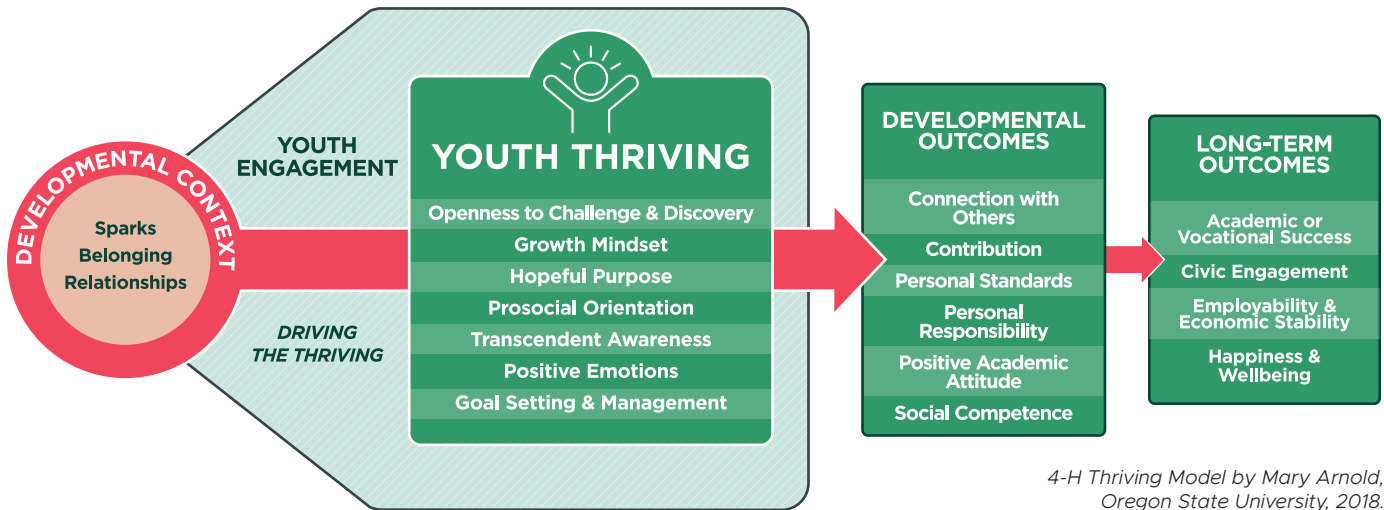
enrolled adult
volunteer leaders

Top 10 Enrolled 4-H Projects

PROJECT	MEMBERS
Art	6,492
Photography	6,366
Cloverbuds (early elementary exploratory project)	5,292
Foods and Nutrition	4,271
Woodworking	4,128
Swine	3,931
Poultry	3,491
Drawing and Painting	3,351
Beef	3,192
Archery	2,959

HELPING YOUTH THRIVE

4-H THRIVING MODEL



4-H Thriving Model by Mary Arnold,
Oregon State University, 2018.

How Youth Thrive in 4-H: Our Theory of Change

We all hope for young people to succeed in life. In partnership with local communities, volunteers, and families, the Wisconsin 4-H program sets the stage for young people to lead lives characterized by happiness and well-being, civic engagement, academic and vocational success, and employability and economic stability.

To help young people realize these aspirational, long-term outcomes later in life, 4-H is dedicated to offering the best, high-quality experience for

every youth member. High-quality 4-H programs give youth opportunities to explore their “sparks” and gain a sense of belonging in a setting where they are supported by caring adults who challenge growth. Youth-adult partnership, in which youth and adults work together on program activities, is a characteristic of high-quality programs.

The better their experience — defined as having the opportunity to explore their interests in ways that challenge them with support from adults and in

ways that give them a sense of emotional safety and belonging — the better their short-term outcomes (Thriving Trajectory) will be. And the more they thrive, the more they will have better longer-term developmental outcomes, including a positive academic attitude and social competence. All this is to say that the developmental context in which 4-H programming occurs makes a big difference in youths’ success in other areas of life.



The Wisconsin 4-H Youth Survey

To measure how well 4-H is providing high-quality programs and how 4-H youth members are thriving, Wisconsin 4-H uses the **Wisconsin 4-H Youth Survey** to measure youths' perceptions about the context in which their 4-H programs occur. In fall 2023, the most recent Thriving Survey was administered to over 11,000 4-H members aged 13 and over. Over 2,500 members completed the survey — a 22 percent return rate — which provided excellent data and insight into the quality and impact of the Wisconsin 4-H program.

What's Next?

Wisconsin 4-H state specialists and county 4-H program educators use the results of the survey to inform methods and priorities to improve program quality and, in turn, youth outcomes. Both statewide and local data from the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Survey are easily available to staff and, in turn, the volunteers in which they support. Wisconsin 4-H is proud to be a leader in the nation for collecting, utilizing, and integrating the 4-H Thriving Model and survey results in our program.

Over time, the team of 4-H staff and volunteers will continue to work to improve the already-high program quality within 4-H to ensure that all Wisconsin youth have the opportunity to thrive.

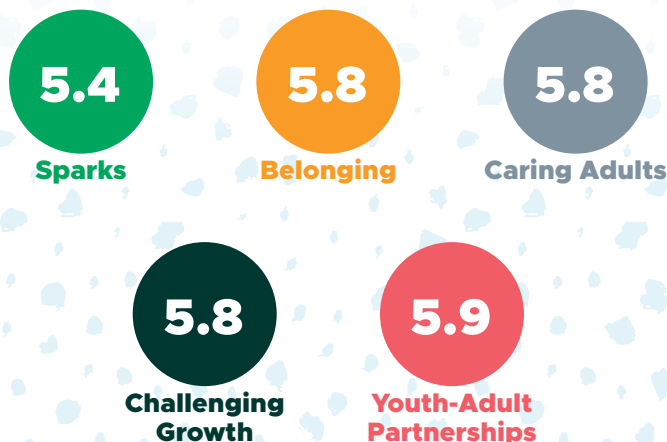


Wisconsin 4-H Thriving Evaluation Team

- Josset Gauley, Lead Evaluator
- Ellen Andrews
- Aimee Elkins
- Alicia Schroeder-Haag
- Marie Witzel
- Lisa Curley
- Christa VanTreeck
- Neil Klemme
- Ian Meeker

Is Wisconsin 4-H a high-quality program?

Yes! Youth rated all elements of their 4-H program as “high quality.”



Are Wisconsin 4-H members thriving?

Yes! Youth reported all areas of the “thriving trajectory” as either “high” or “very high.”



Scale

- Very Low = 1.0 to 2.2
- Low = 2.3 to 3.5
- Moderate = 3.6 to 4.8
- High = 4.9 to 6.1
- Very High = 6.2 to 7.0

Nature's Helpers: WI 4-H Pollinator Habitat Team

Learning, doing, and making a difference — that is what this group of 4-H members have done over the past year as they worked to address the declining number of pollinator species. In 2022–23, a group of eight 4-H members, supported by 4-H Animal Science and Agriculture Outreach Specialist Jill Jorgensen, joined together to form the first-ever statewide 4-H Pollinator Habitat Team. Supported by a grant through the National 4-H Council, these 4-H youth leaders — Kylie G., Susan H., Candace L., Hailey L., Kaleb W., Shannon R., Zach S., and Rabeka L. — created a plan to help others learn about the importance of pollinators, as well as implement a number of pollinator-supporting projects throughout the state. Brainstorming and action planning was supported through a transformational trip to Washington, DC, to participate in the National 4-H Council's Ignite by 4-H conference, an opportunity to learn, practice, and apply problem solving and leadership skills along with 4-H teens from all over the country. Upon return to

Wisconsin, the Wisconsin 4-H Pollinator Habitat Team launched into action, including the following:

- Led hands-on, fun activities about why pollinators are important with young people throughout the state at 4-H meetings, schools, and community organizations.
- Partnered with UW–Madison's Department of Horticulture to support and increase involvement in a butterfly species art contest.
- Established pollinator habitats in several Wisconsin locations: Racine County Fairgrounds, pollinator container gardens in various Wisconsin communities, and a Chippewa County farm site.
- One team member became so passionate about pollinators that she took a full dive into working with a local pollinator society to start and care for a beehive of her own and share this work with the 4-H Pollinator Habitat Team.



Supporter Recognition

- National 4-H Council
- Corteva Agriscience
- Wisconsin 4-H Foundation





Youth Explore Careers at the Inaugural Summer Academy

During early summer 2023, 286 youth descended on the UW–Madison campus to explore areas of interest and future career paths. The inaugural Summer Academy, hosted by the Division of Extension’s Institute of Positive Youth Development, was held on the UW–Madison campus June 19–22, 2023. This new, immersive program invited 7–11 grade youth to experience living and learning on a college campus at both UW–Madison and Madison Area Technical College, interact with youth from all corners and communities of Wisconsin, and participate in assemblies with inspiring speakers and diverse entertainment. Delegates dug deep into an area of interest through enrolling in one of seven potential career areas: Arts and Communication, Leadership and Civic Engagement, Agriculture and Animal Science, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Health and Culinary Arts, Construction and Trades, and Human Services.

Building on past youth conferences hosted by Wisconsin 4-H, the state 4-H Art Team, 4-H Drama Company, and Wisconsin 4-H Leadership Council inspired, entertained, and shined as bright examples of youth leadership in action during the week.

The Summer Academy experience made a difference.

Offered on a three-point scale (“Mostly Yes,” “Kind of,” and “Mostly No”), participants indicated “Mostly Yes” on the following statements:

73% I learned about people who were different from me

66% I can apply what I learned to other parts of my lives

60% I learned something I can take back to my communities

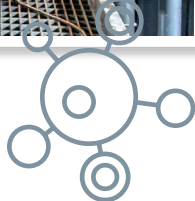
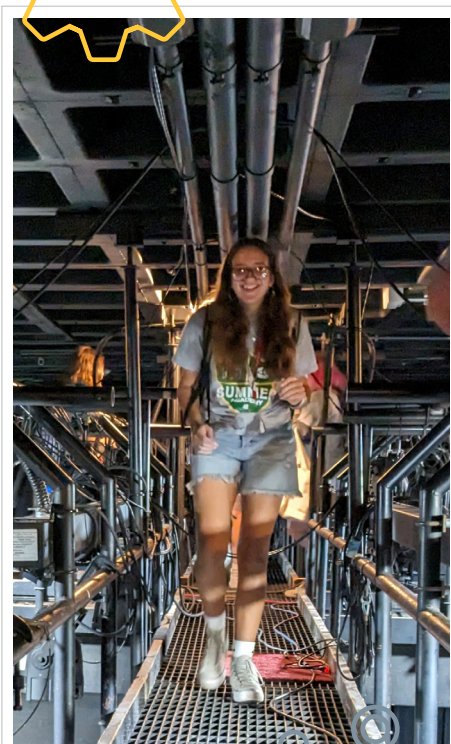
53% I had an opportunity to share my ideas

45% I learned something new about myself



Supporter Recognition

- Patrick Theile
- American Transmission Company
- Wisconsin 4-H Foundation



WISCONSIN 4-H MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Brianna

Calumet County 4-H Graduate

Brianna's involvement in 4-H began in third grade and played a pivotal role in shaping her academic path. She attributes her decision to major in dairy science at UW–Madison to her experiences in 4-H. In fact, her college application essay for UW–Madison revolved around her tenure as the president of the Chilton Tiptop 4-H club. Her journey as the president commenced during eighth grade, a time when she vividly remembers feeling nervous and lacking confidence when speaking in front of her peers. Over time, this leadership

role compelled Brianna to step out of her comfort zone and refine her communication skills. In her essay, she reflected on her desire to pass the torch to the next student, hoping that they too would benefit from the same growth and skill development she experienced. Brianna's advice to future 4-H members is clear — don't be afraid to venture beyond your comfort zone and explore new opportunities. It is through these experiences that you discover your passions and hone your skills.



Noah

Fond du Lac County 4-H LEGO Club

Noah's involvement with 4-H began in kindergarten, and he has held various leadership positions, including club president in seventh grade, treasurer of the 4-H Teen Leader Association group as a freshman, and president of the 4-H Teen Leader Association group as a junior. For the past three years, he has served as the founder of the 4-H LEGO Club. The idea for the club originated when Noah's 4-H program educator, Tracy Keifenheim, recognized his talents and proposed the idea of creating a LEGO club. Noah agreed, seeing it as an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the hobby and showcase his abilities.

Over time, the club has transformed into a platform where young 4-H members can enhance their presentation skills and openly discuss their challenges and how they successfully overcame them. This club has not only fueled his passion for a career in civil engineering, but has also cultivated in him qualities of patience and adaptability when collaborating with and leading others. Noah's advice is to embrace the opportunity to learn from your mistakes without fear of failure, as these experiences offer valuable lessons and chances for improvement.



Janina and Shelby

Waukesha County 4-H Youth Leaders

Janina and Shelby exemplify the impact and importance of Waukesha County 4-H's Emerging Leaders group. Emerging Leaders provides middle and high school students opportunities to excel as they prepare for college and careers by offering academic support, exploration of higher education options and careers, and hands-on learning to develop leadership and life skills. Janina and Shelby have stepped up as exceptional leaders within this group, dedicating their time to both volunteer and inspire elementary students while also embracing

opportunities to learn from partnering adult volunteers. Both young women credit the program for shaping their personal beliefs and fueling their unique interests, aiding them in post-high school decision-making. Their growth and commitment to the future is a shining example of how Extension Educators, like Waukesha County Youth & Family Educator James Boling, and partnering volunteers nurture young people, leading to personal growth, growing leadership skills, and a generation passionate about making a positive impact in their community.



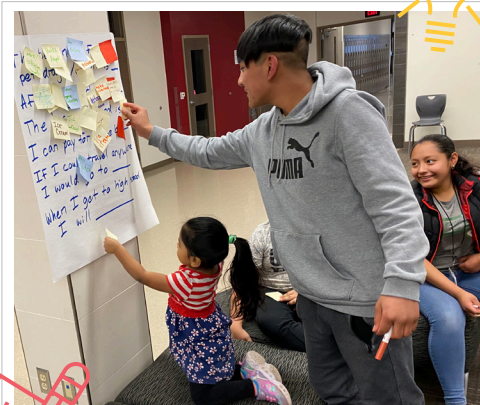
Working Together: Juntos 4-H Club

Juntos means “together” in Spanish and aims to unite community partners to support Latino students (grades 8–12) and their parents. In Wisconsin, the program comprises four components: family engagement through workshops and events, the establishment of Juntos 4-H Clubs, monthly one-on-one coaching/mentoring, and summer programming.

In 2022–23, the development of chartered Juntos 4-H clubs in Wisconsin began. These clubs, developed collaboratively by educators, volunteers, and families, prioritize creating a safe and inclusive environment. Similar to all 4-H clubs, the foundation lies in fostering a

sense of belonging, nurturing relationships between youth and adults, and providing ample opportunities for members to explore their interests or sparks.

In Trempealeau County, Juntos 4-H is supported by Adam Trunzo, Juntos Wisconsin Coordinator, and Andrea Rippley-Schlais, 4-H Program Educator. Families toured Western Technical College to explore degrees and certifications. They also visited the Trempealeau County Fair for a fairgrounds tour and to connect with other 4-H youth. Additionally, they attended a financial aid night at Arcadia High School to gain insights into funding higher education.



Supporter Recognition

- Extension Innovation Grant
- Wisconsin 4-H Foundation

Raising Chicks and Connecting Kids: 4-H Classroom Clubs Launch in Wisconsin

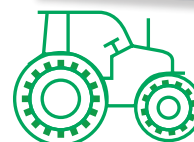
Can you join 4-H as part of school? In a growing number of counties in Wisconsin, the answer is yes! Elementary school students are given the opportunity to embark on an exciting six-week learning adventure called ChickQuest. Youth learn how to prepare an incubator habitat and welcome embryonic chick eggs. As they observe the 21-day life cycle and prepare for hatching, students work as real-world scientists observing, recording, analyzing, experimenting, problem solving, and more.

With the partnership of a county 4-H educator, youth become a member of a 4-H classroom club! During the 2022–23 school year, the ChickQuest classroom club model, under the leadership of 4-H Program Educator

Dana Berger, made it possible for Winnebago County 4-H to reach eight classrooms located in three different school districts, totalling over 150 students. The club's focus is around specific project learning (poultry) to cultivate a sense of belonging (working in teams as well as an open invitation to county-wide events) and build positive relationships between the youth and supporting adult leaders and educators.

Students in the classroom become members of their county's 4-H program and are invited to belong to the 4-H community through county programs and events, such as 4-H camp.

Classroom clubs decrease barriers to joining 4-H and help more youth thrive.



Supporter Recognition

- Wisconsin 4-H Foundation

Celebrating Culture through 4-H: Nicianak 4-H Club

The celebration of culture and heritage shines strong within the Nicianak 4-H Club of Menominee Nation. Through activities celebrating the Menominee Nation legacy, the club's members, leaders, and families, guided by 4-H Program Educator Sofie Teller-Cloud, create an inclusive and safe environment for youth, as well as the local community, to explore their culture and traditions.

Native American Heritage Month is recognized through hosting classes

about culture and history. The club has also hosted powwow preparation classes to teach youth and their families about singing, dancing, and drumming. Youth were given the opportunity to converse with royalty and other adults, asking questions and learning more about these performance skills and their history. While many of those who participated were part of 4-H, the event was also open to the community, allowing others to join in the festivities and experience the culture.

Growing confidence among younger members was seen at the powwow preparation classes, creating a great kinship between all who attended. By organizing and participating in these events, the club is able to carry on the traditions and legacies of the Menominee Nation and continue to educate others on its importance.



Photos courtesy of Lynn Zaffrann/NEW Media

Launching an AmeriCorps and Wisconsin 4-H Partnership

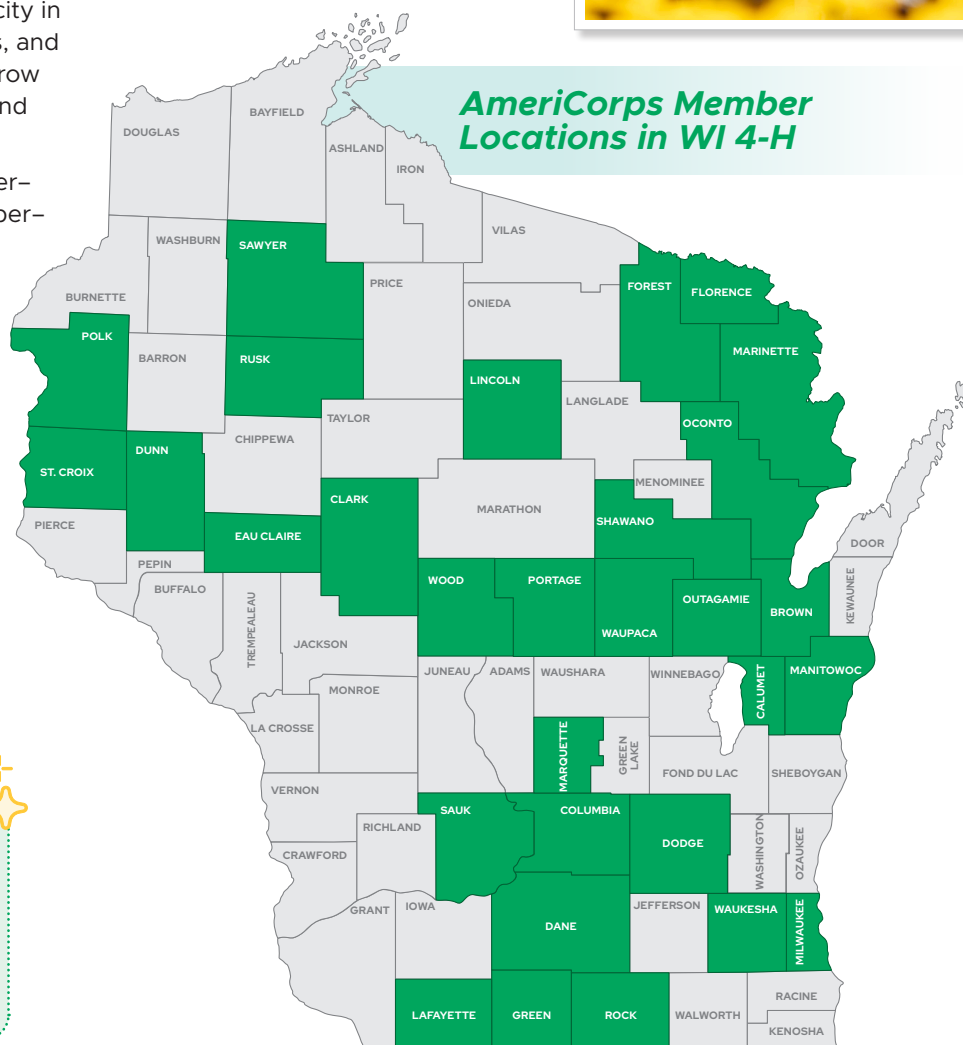
The mission of the AmeriCorps program is “to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.” We could argue that there is no better partner to help grow and expand 4-H throughout Wisconsin than AmeriCorps.

In its first year, Wisconsin 4-H received funding through Serve Wisconsin to implement a statewide 4-H AmeriCorps program. Wisconsin 4-H is placing AmeriCorps members in 29 counties across Wisconsin between September 2023 and August 2024. The members develop new and expanded relationships in counties, serving in partnership with local organizations to build capacity in communities, start new 4-H clubs, and recruit additional volunteers to grow Wisconsin 4-H, expand access, and reach new audiences.

Members serve in full- (September–August), three quarter- (September–August), half- (January–August), and quarter-time (summer) positions. Members must be at least 18 years of age, have a high school diploma, and be ready to get things done for their communities. After completing a full term of service, AmeriCorps members may receive an award of over \$6,000 that they can use to pay for college or to pay off student loans.

Wisconsin 4-H plans to recruit AmeriCorps members for years to come as a way to help more young people benefit from time in 4-H clubs. As we spread the word about this extraordinary opportunity for individuals and communities, we know the ripple effect of the Wisconsin 4-H/AmeriCorps partnership will help 4-H and its partnering organizations “make the best better.”

Have questions or want to learn more? Contact your local educator, or Melinda Pollen (melinda.pollen@wisc.edu). Visit AmeriCorps.gov to learn more about AmeriCorps and its successful history!



Supporter Recognition

- Serve Wisconsin
- Corporation for National and Community Service

“AmeriCorps members will serve in local Extension offices providing positive 4-H youth development programming directly to youth. Their focus will be on growing 4-H clubs in partnership with other organizations or associations. Through AmeriCorps, members will work with local educators to grow and build 4-H community clubs, classroom clubs, after-school clubs, or military family clubs through intentional and focused efforts to provide youth a holistic and complete 4-H experience.”

—**Melinda Pollen**
AmeriCorps Program Director
for Wisconsin 4-H



Volunteers Make It Possible

Wisconsin 4-H is a youth-led, volunteer-supported community-based program. Without adults who willingly contribute their time, talent, energy, and effort to youth throughout Wisconsin, 4-H would not exist! We are thankful for all of the 4-H volunteers who continue to support 4-H programs throughout the state, pass on their knowledge and passion, and help 4-H clubs grow to serve today's youth and communities.



5,654

enrolled WI 4-H
volunteers in 2022-23

225,000

hours contributed by WI
4-H volunteers each year



\$6,743,250

value* of WI 4-H volunteer
time contributions in 2022-23

*Independent Sector value of volunteer time for Wisconsin in 2022 is estimated at \$29.97/hour.

370

trained in
Supporting
Youth Mental
Health in 2023

659

new
volunteers
in 2023



13

average
years of
service



“Being with 4-Hers fills my bucket! It has been a pleasure working with youth as they grow in confidence and leadership skills. I have been blessed to learn with youth at Space Camp, American Spirit, CWF, National Congress, Winter Retreats, Spring Planning, Farm Bureau Trade Show, Summer Academy, Art Beat, Arts Camp, International Travel Orientations, the list goes on and on...being part of the youth's road to leadership has filled my bucket for years! Watching the youth start quiet, shy, and unsure of themselves turn into confident, strong young leaders through the experiences and years of 4-H fills my heart with joy.”

—Cindi, Eau Claire County

“I volunteer because I enjoy working within true youth and adult partnerships. When youth feel empowered their confidence grows. Youth can do amazing things, and they deserve to have a voice and a chance.”

—Lisa, Outagamie County

EXTENSION

IS YOUR



CONNECTION

UW–Madison Extension’s outreach creates key connection points for families, communities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, government, and more. We support local volunteers and leaders to take action and serve as role models in their communities, and we make sure Wisconsinites have the latest research, best practices, and educational opportunities.



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