

4-H in the Community: Onwards and Upwards

By Sierra Cochrane-Beder

Since 1915, 4-H has been building stronger communities by fostering a culture of dedication and commitment to the head, heart, hands and health of individuals in Ontario. These four pillars collectively form the basis of 4-H and all it has to offer; a seed planted many years ago that continues to expand its roots in new places and communities.

By encouraging clearer thinking, greater loyalty, larger service and better living, 4-H strives to strengthen the entirety of the person, and the capacity of each person to lend themselves to their club, community, country, and world. This focus on lending ones' self to the greater good is what 4-H offers to the community. A strong community always starts with strong, well-rounded individuals, and that is exactly what 4-H cultivates.

By allowing members to connect with industry leaders, attend conferences and meetings, and ask thoughtful questions on a variety of topics from agriculture to finance and art, 4-H sparks curiosity in members and transforms this spark into burning passion, encouraging youth to think clearly and deliberately. 4-H is the hub for tomorrow's problem solvers and critical thinkers who will undoubtedly serve the greater community through their innovative thinking and work.

4-H also emphasizes the importance of loyalty and having heart: teaching members about teamwork, empathy, compassion and service. 4-H members are able to practice these skills through participation in clubs, when on a club executive, and during 4-H community outreach and fundraising. Participation in 4-H encourages members to connect with each other while welcoming people from all walks of life. Valuing kindness and service is a skill that guides members to create an inclusive and supportive community everywhere they go.

Importantly, 4-H encourages members to focus on their own wellbeing and have concern for the health of others. In this, 4-H inspires consideration of the philosophy that, in order to create a productive and cohesive world, one should consider how they can preserve and improve the wellbeing of others.

Each one of the skills cultivated within 4-H spans far beyond the 4-H community itself, reaching the greater community and larger world. The skills that 4-H teaches are transferable to any and every situation a 4-H member will encounter throughout their life. 4-H members have the privilege of relying on enriched thinking, loyalty, service and health, and will use these things to benefit the world around them. Kindness and curiosity are infectious, and 4-H members consistently pass these virtues on to others, outside of the 4-H community. This chain reaction of exponential improvement persists through time and space, and it all begins with 4-H.

By supporting the growth and intellect of members, 4-H supports the growth of tomorrow's educators, scientists, artists, policy makers and human beings, and consequently, tomorrow's community. 4-H members go on to do great things, using their unique skills to bring about change in the world, all while lifting the greater community as they work diligently to achieve greatness.

