

**Title: Teens 4-H Experiences in Their Own Words**

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*Description:* This study showcased what current and former 4-H members believe they have gained (in their own words) from 4-H. Ten current and former 4-H members participated in two focus group interviews to share their experiences.

*Major Findings:* Current members of 4-H maintained that they have chosen 4-H because it taught them leadership abilities and gave them many opportunities at things they otherwise would not have done. Those who dropped out indicated that 4-H meetings were boring, projects were simple, and they felt that the group leaders were not as helpful.

Most participants indicated that their parents and older siblings were influential in joining 4-H. Families did in fact play a major role in their participation in 4-H.

Participants described their 4-H experiences as very positive. They claimed it opened doors for them and allowed them to meet new people, not only just friends but professionals who can be potentially helpful in future situations.

Community involvement seemed to play a big role in 4-H. A participant's statement captures the very essence of community involvement. "We are not merely just "farm boys/girls" that shoveled manure and worked in barns all day, but brilliant kids who cared about the community and the environment."

Participants gave suggestions on how 4-H programs can be improved: 1) instituting classes/projects geared towards certain age groups or even simply revamping the project book, and 2) developing age-specific programs and making project books become progressively harder as the age level increases.

