4-H Today: Five National Initiatives

4-H today is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. For more than a century, the four H’s on the well-known 4-H clover—representing Head, Heart, Hands and Health—have been recognized as a trusted framework for excellence in positive youth development.

The 4-H program, a joint collaboration between the United States Department of Agriculture, land-grant universities, state and local governments and private partners, welcomes all young people to participate in a “learning-by-doing” environment where they are able to actively participate in hands-on experiences and make a lasting impact in their communities. Today’s 4-H focuses on the following five national initiative areas:

4-H Afterschool:
- Represents all 4-H clubs who meet during the after-school timeframe.
- Provides staff training and resource materials.
- Is a highly effective delivery system and an efficient and cost effective method of providing quality after-school programs to our young people.
- Since 2003, 4-H Afterschool has helped more than 2,400 4-H youth development specialists and more than 9,000 after-school staff and volunteers work with over 120,000 youth, numbers that continue to rise.

Youth in Governance:
- Infuses youth into decision-making bodies and processes—both within 4-H and in the broader community—at local, state and national levels.
- Identifies best practices, resources and training modules for organizations and communities interested in positive youth development and strengthening communities and democracy in general.
- Is a catalyst for new research and new programs and leverages existing efforts, skills and knowledge.
- Identifies programmatic expertise and links successful current efforts to the infrastructure of 4-H.

Healthy Lifestyles:
- Teaches nutrition and promotes physical activity among youth.
- Shapes the way young people view diet, exercise and nutrition.
- Helps youth work to bring about systemic change on good health for their families, their communities and themselves.
- Provides grants to communities where youth promote both exercise and nutrition in their program designs, demonstrating the importance of balancing diet and exercise.
Professional Development:

• Gives 4-H educators the skills, competencies and confidence they need to make the greatest impact on the lives of the 4-H youth with whom they work.
• Utilizes a comprehensive research and knowledge base that focuses on what matters most when working with young people.
• Honors top programs, staff and volunteers through recognition awards, scholarships and collaborative training opportunities.

Science, Engineering and Technology:

• Provides youth with opportunities to engage in a process of discovery and exploration in science, engineering and technology that will prepare them to meet the challenges of the 21st century.
• Offers curricula with an extraordinary range of engaging and challenging activities for youth of all ages and abilities that can impart science literacy while also serving the fundamental developmental needs of youth.
• Draws upon a rich and diverse set of research-based curricula and activities that provide hands-on, real world experiences delivered in both informal and formal settings.
• Taps into 4-H’s direct access to technological advances in agriculture and life sciences, family and consumer resource management, human development, nutrition and related areas, which result from land-grant university research.

4-H today is ever-growing and changing.
To learn more about the community of 4-H, visit:

www.4husa.org.