



Contributions and Impact of Wisconsin 4-H Volunteers

Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development programs are delivered primarily through volunteers. These volunteers are critical partners to the overall success and impact of Wisconsin 4-H.

Purpose of Study

In 2008, the North Central Region 4-H volunteer specialists identified a need to better understand roles and contributions of the region's adult 4-H volunteers. As a cooperative effort, a survey was developed to gather state and regional data. The goals for this descriptive survey were to identify demographic information for current 4-H volunteers, ways in which adults volunteer within 4-H, the time and personal resources volunteers provide and the influence the 4-H volunteer experience has on volunteers and youth. Survey results provided by 270 Wisconsin 4-H volunteers are summarized below:

Key findings from the study

- Demanding 4-H roles are often filled by those in their "peak" volunteer years.*
 - 48% are 42-51 years old; 21% are 52-61; 20% are 32-41.
 - 55% are project leaders; 26% are club or organizational leaders.
- Responses suggested that 4-H volunteers have completed more formal education than the general population.*
 - 33% have completed a bachelor's degree; 25% have some college background. All have completed high school.
- Wisconsin volunteers have committed to the "long haul" with 4-H. However, there also seems to be a growing population of short-term volunteers.*
 - 66% of Wisconsin volunteers have served more than six years; 33% have been involved as volunteers five years or less.
- Volunteers tend to be more active during summer months.*
 - 60% reported volunteering six or more hours per week from June to August, compared to 29% from September to May.
- Volunteers spend nearly equal time preparing for their roles as they do in direct contact with youth.*
 - 72% spend one to five hours per month planning and preparing; 18% spend six to ten hours per month.
 - 68% spend one to five hours per month in direct contact with youth; 18% spend six to ten hours per month.
- Volunteers contribute more than time to 4-H.*
 - Other contributions include making more than six phone calls per month (32% of volunteers) or sending more than six emails (38%).
 - 24% of volunteers spent \$25 to \$50 on non-reimbursed supplies. 53% of Wisconsin volunteers made other financial contributions to 4-H.
 - 45% of volunteers travel more than 25 miles per month for their volunteer service roles.

How does volunteering impact the 4-H volunteers?

- 4-H provides volunteers the opportunity to help youth grow and develop.
- 4-H gives adults opportunity for personal growth, including building confidence and social skills.
- 4-H enables volunteers to contribute to the 4-H mission and give back to the organization.
- 4-H provides adults with social benefits like community connections.

Selected comments from respondents:

How has your 4-H volunteer experience influenced your life?

- “It has taught me many valuable skills in management, communication, goal-setting, leadership, working with groups and many other valuable skills. It has given me confidence in myself. It was also key in helping me make my decision in what I wanted to do as an adult. I have gained many friendships due to all the activities I have been involved in.”
- “I’ve really grown in confidence of my ability to lead. I’ve found I really enjoy being a role model for children other than my own. I’ve discovered talents and interests I didn’t know I had. 4-H is such a great “family” organization; we’ve made a lot of close friends.”
- “It has influenced my life by making me a better communicator. It has also opened my eyes to the great diversity of not only the 4-H program, but of all those involved in it. My life is truly blessed by being part of 4-H.”
- “4-H has helped me develop as a caring, sharing and understanding person.”
- “The youth inspire me with their enthusiasm and give me hope for the future.”

How do 4-H volunteers impact 4-H youth?

- 4-H volunteers serve as positive role models for youth.
- 4-H volunteers are able to support, encourage and “be there” for youth.
- 4-H volunteers help youth develop community connections and become active citizens in their communities.
- 4-H volunteers help youth learn new content and master new topics.

Selected comments from respondents:

Describe the impact you believe you have had on youth through your 4-H volunteer role.

- “I have had the joy of watching club youth develop into caring, giving, accomplished youth who have and are still serving their communities and their families. As a leader for 20 years, I have seen many a youth grow up and become an active member of their community.”
- “Being a club leader, I see how the kids model me and I try to be a good role model. Many kids who don’t have a lot of self esteem have the opportunity through 4-H to be really good at something they are not offered anywhere else. In school you are recognized by your athletic ability or your academics. In 4-H you can be Grand Champion with any of your projects – there is a level playing field, per se. I help the kids in any way I can.”
- “I have been able to teach youth many life skills related to planning, accomplishing goals, leadership and community service. I think they have learned to respect and care for nature and take better photos.”
- “The impact that 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. If they learn to live the 4-H motto, I feel they will also become a great asset to their community.”

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To view the whole report, visit:

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