

4-H Celebrates 100 Years

By Susan McGinley

The largest youth development organization in the United States turned 100 in 2002, with 6.8 million participating young people from all 50 states and another 5 million in 80 other countries. These youth, along with an estimated 60 million alumni, proudly call themselves 4-H'ers.

In Arizona, more than 74,000 youth ages 5-19 are involved in 4-H clubs, camps, non-formal groups, school enrichment programs and special interest programs.

With 4-H programs in all 15 counties, the state's 4-H program offers educational projects, events and activities for both urban and rural youth. More than 4,400 adult volunteers assist with this program.

"Much has changed in 4-H over the past one hundred years, but the principles behind the program remain unchanged," says Bill Peterson, assistant director, Arizona 4-H Youth Development. "Character development and education enable youth to be competent, capable and caring citizens." The program is administered through Cooperative Extension, in the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Although the centennial celebration continued throughout the year, then-Gov. Jane D. Hull proclaimed October 6-12, 2002 "4-H Week" in recognition of the contribution 4-H has made in helping youth and adults learn and grow and work together in Arizona.

Nationally, the program that began in Ohio in 1902 with a boys' and girls' agriculture club expanded and grew to encompass not only plant and animal projects, but activities in science and technology, natural resources, leadership and citizenship, individual and family resources, and the communication and expressive arts as well.

"From urban gardening to rocketry, from ropes challenge courses to high school financial planning, 4-H youth in Arizona are pursuing interests in practical ways that enrich their lives, their families and their communities," says Lisa Lauxman, curriculum coordinator, 4-H Youth Development.

In 1902, the majority of Americans lived on farms. The community club model engaged youth through "learning by doing." Organized outside of school, parents served as volunteer leaders partnering with educators to provide appropriate curriculum and materials. By 1907 the USDA was



sponsoring boys' and girls' demonstration clubs in Mississippi, and the club idea eventually spread nationally under the clover emblem and the name 4-H. The first three H's in the clover emblem—head, heart and hands—were developed in the early 1900s. It was in the 1920s that the fourth H for health was added. The organization was administered through Cooperative

Extension at land grant universities beginning in 1914, the year the Cooperative Extension Service was established through the Smith Lever Act.

In the state of Arizona, 4-H began in 1913 with the Cotton Boys' Club in Chandler. In the early years most club projects focused on corn, cotton, grain sorghum and swine. By the 1940s the program had expanded to include club work with Native Americans on the reservations. Membership grew rapidly in the 1970s. Urban and minority youth joined in large numbers because of affirmative action programming and other specially funded programs, especially in Maricopa and Pima counties. With the increasing urban audience, 4-H programming expanded to include the interests of both city and farm youth.

Examples of current Arizona programs include:

- Aerospace
- Animal Science
- Character Development
- Clothing
- Financial Planning
- Gardening
- Leadership

The state office for Arizona 4-H Youth Development is located at the University of Arizona in Tucson. For more information about the programs listed above and about Arizona 4-H in general see

cals.arizona.edu/4-h/
or call

(520) 621-3623.

For information about national 4-H, see

www.fourhcouncil.edu.