Many people have heard of 4-H, but many are not sure what it is. Often cows and cooking are what people think of when they think of 4-H, and in our beginnings, in 1902, that was a good definition. However, now we are so much more, offering programs to all youth between the ages of 5 and 19.

Many ask why they should join 4-H. The reasons to join 4-H are nearly endless. The 4-H Program is a great educational youth program and part of North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The 4-H Program is actually the largest youth organization in the United States with over seven million youth members. There are many ways to be a part of this incredible organization. The 4-H clubs are the most popular way to be part of 4-H, but we also offer school-enrichment programs; after-school programming; summer camps; as well as county, district, and state competitions.

In Robeson County, 4-H works with more than 6,300 youth annually. Why is 4-H so popular? It could be because 4-H provides research-based hands-on learning opportunities in a safe and nurturing environment to help youth develop life skills. Life skills are things like decision-making, goal setting, communication, and leadership. We like to say youth accidentally learn while having a whole lot of fun. This youth organization also offers opportunities for belonging – young people don’t just join 4-H … they belong! Youth need to know they are cared about and accepted by others and that their lives have meaning and a purpose. As a part of 4-H, youth have opportunities to connect to their communities and learn how to give back to others.

Many people ask what the 4-H emblem (the green clover with 4 white Hs) stands for. The green clover stands for growth while the white Hs stand for Head, Heart, Hands, Health, and the purity of youth. Each H has a special meaning and purpose: Head - 4-H challenges youth to think and make good decisions, Heart - gives them an opportunity to sort out their ideas and emotions, Hands - they learn skills they can use the rest of their lives, and Health - focusing on developing healthy lifestyles.

This organization helps to shape youth to move our country and the world forward in ways that no other youth organization can. Research shows that 4-H plays a vital role in the lives of young people, and 4-H members are: two times more likely to get better grades, two times more likely to plan to attend college, 41 percent less likely to engage in risky behaviors, and 25 percent more likely to make a positive contribution to their families and communities. It does not cost anything to be a 4-H member, and we have clubs and activities throughout the year and county. In Robeson County, you can find 4-H through schools, community clubs, special interest clubs, after-school programs, camps, and other activities.
Becoming a member of 4-H is a simple thing. Although 4-H is open to youth ages 5 to 19, the whole family can participate. Robeson County 4-H works with more than 150 adult volunteers, and they are the key to our success. All you have to do to be a member is contact the Cooperative Extension 4-H staff.

For more information on how to join a 4-H club, please contact Aggie Rogers, 4-H Program Associate with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, at 671-3276, by E-mail at Aggie_Rogers@ncsu.edu, or visit our website at http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu/.