

4-H: Want to make a difference in your community?

By SHANNA ABATTI, Special to this newspaper | Posted: Wednesday, April 4, 2018 12:30 am

As a true 4-H'er, I pledge my Head to clearer thinking, my Heart to greater loyalty, my Hands to larger service, and my Health to better living, for my club, my community, my country and my world. — 4-H Pledge

Through its pledge of “hands to larger service,” 4-H has historically given back to the community by encouraging young people and adults to volunteer. In 4-H, community service learning is a perfect blend of organized community service and established learning goals.

What’s the difference between community service and community service learning? The two service processes are actually quite different. Leaders and youth have traditionally worked together to address the needs of their community while striving to make a positive difference. Community service learning encompasses community service, yet goes one step further. Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.

It is more than just volunteerism. The main difference between community service and community service learning in 4-H is that community service learning intentionally links service that meets community needs to specific learning objectives that positively develop 4-H youth members. Community service learning in 4-H also involves the important aspect of reflection, which is a careful review of what was learned from conducting the service to the community. The youth members are charged with the task of determining the community needs and helping solve community problems.

The UCCE – Imperial County 4-H Youth Development carries out its pledge by involving young people in a variety of community-service learning projects and programs. This year, we currently have members organizing ways to give back to the Imperial County Humane Society, Betty Jo McNeece Receiving Home, The Imperial Valley Food Bank, and many more areas of need in Imperial County. We also have youth from all over the county hosting camps for underserved youth and a variety of literacy workshop programs.

These are just a few of the many examples of youth and adults working together to serve community needs while reflecting on why these programs are beneficial to Imperial County.



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Magnolia and M & M, two Brawley 4-H clubs team, together to create a 4-H-themed table for the Boys and Girls Club of Imperial Valley’s Annual Combo Auction fundraiser. PHOTOS COURTESY IMPERIAL COUNTY 4-H

By giving back to their communities through 4-H, young people learn the value of helping others. They develop leadership, communication, organizational skills and a sense of empowerment.

4-H members learn how to cooperate with one another and work as a team with diverse groups of people including adults, peers and others with different backgrounds and experiences.

They build self-esteem from the positive results of their service.

They develop problem-solving and decision-making skills by applying their knowledge to real-world situations while developing a sense of being responsible for their community and a sense that citizenship requires them to participate actively in their community.

For more information on how to get involved as a youth or adult volunteer please contact Shanna Abatti at (442) 265-7700 or smabatti@ucanr.edu