

Dear Lynn,

We are a new 4-H family and don't really understand what citizenship means in the context of the 4-H program. Can you please explain it to me?

Sincerely, Patty Patriot

Dear Patty Patriot,

In the California 4-H Youth Development Program, "Citizenship" is defined in broad terms. It is more than voting and understanding how government works. Citizenship incorporates concepts of "youth in governance", "civic engagement" and uses strategies such as service learning and community service to foster young people's sense of connection to communities.

Citizenship activities in 4-H foster the development of "generosity" which allow 4-H members to see that their efforts to help others is important and valuable. This is done by connecting to their community and feeling a part of something larger than themselves; sharing time and other resources to assist others; acknowledging and working with those with whom they share space and resources; and by learning to accept differences, resolve conflict, and empathize with others.

Through citizenship activities, 4-H members also develop important life skills; inspire an appreciation for the history and heritage of one's family, community, state and nation; help develop knowledge of the principles, processes, and structures of government; develop awareness and understanding of environmental, social, or other issues; and encourage understanding of how societal issues impact one's self and others.

Opportunities for young people to develop their citizenship skills exist at the local, state, and national levels of the 4-H Youth Development Program, and can be incorporated into any project or activity.

For more information on the 4-H program, visit our website at: <http://cesantacruz.ucdavis.edu>, or contact the 4-H Program Representative Stephanie Fontana at 763-8015 or sfontana@ucdavis.edu.