

Delaware 4-H Camps Help Youth Find Their Spark

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UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**

RELEVANCE

A “**spark**” is something that **excites** a young person – a passion, interest, or activity that gives them energy and purpose. Sparks are one of the most **essential** components of 4-H programs. They help youth grow and thrive.

When youth discover what they care about, they find meaning in what they do.

This provides them with:



- Direction
- Motivation
- Confidence

Young people who **know** their **sparks** are often more:

- Curious
- Creative
- Persistent

They are more likely to:

- Stay involved in school, 4-H clubs, and activities
- Feel valued and capable of making a difference.



When adults and teen mentors notice and **support** a young person's spark, it builds **trust** and a sense of belonging.

These caring relationships help young people thrive.



RESPONSE

Delaware 4-H offers **teen-led** day camps in every county. Teens receive **counselor training** throughout the year and are encouraged to **develop** their **sparks** in leadership and project areas.

With **help** from **4-H educators, teen counselors:**



- Plan and lead the camps
- Choose classes to teach
- Create lesson plans
- Prepare supplies
- Work in teams to lead activities

County educators and counselors also plan large **group activities** to help campers try new things and **explore** their sparks.



Both campers and counselors have the chance to discover new interests and build skills in a fun, supportive environment.



RESULTS

Delaware 4-H hosted seven week-long day camps over the summer. **Seventy-nine** campers completed a **survey** after camp. The results show that 4-H Day Camps help youth explore their sparks and build positive connections:

90% were given the chance to explore something they really care about.

94% were passionate about the things they did at camp.

90% wanted to keep learning about topics they discovered at camp.

Campers also reported strong relationships with adults and teen counselors:

99% felt like they mattered in the program.

95% said adults and counselors invested time in them.

100% said adults and counselors showed interest in them.

88% said adults and counselors helped them see future possibilities.

88% said adults and counselors challenged them to grow in new ways.

“The most important thing I learned at 4-H Camp is that being kind and being enthusiastic about learning new things and making new friends is very healthy.”



RELEVANCE

A “spark” is something that excites a young person – a passion, interest, or activity that gives them energy and purpose. Sparks are one of the most essential components of 4-H programs. They help youth grow and thrive. When youth discover what they care about, they find meaning in what they do. This provides them with direction, motivation, and confidence to set and achieve positive goals. Young people who know their sparks are often more curious, creative, and persistent. They are more likely to stay involved in school, 4-H clubs, and community activities because they enjoy what they’re doing. When youth use their sparks to help others, they feel valued and capable of making a difference. When adults and teen mentors notice and support a young person’s spark, it builds trust and a sense of belonging. These caring relationships help young people thrive.

RESPONSE

Delaware 4-H offers teen-led day camps in every county. Teens receive counselor training throughout the year and are encouraged to develop their sparks in leadership and project areas. With help from 4-H educators, teen counselors plan and lead the camps. They choose classes to teach based on their interests and what they think younger campers will enjoy. Teens create lesson plans, prepare supplies, and work in teams to lead activities. Campers select from a range of classes and participate in several workshops each day. County educators and counselors also plan large group activities to help campers try new things and explore their sparks. Both campers and counselors have the chance to discover new interests and build skills in a fun, supportive environment.

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- 100% said adults and counselors showed interest in them.
- 88% said adults and counselors helped them see future possibilities.
- 88% said adults and counselors challenged them to grow in new ways.

One camper said, “The most important thing I learned at 4-H Camp is that being kind and being enthusiastic about learning new things and making new friends is very healthy.”

RECOGNITION

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References:

- Search Institute. (2019). Discovering and developing sparks: How caring adults can help youth thrive. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute. <https://searchinstitute.org>
- Arnold, Mary Elizabeth and Gagnon, Ryan (2012) “Positive Youth Development Theory in Practice: An Update on the 4-H Thriving Model,” Journal of Youth Development: Vol. 15: Iss. 6, Article 16.

PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

Delaware 4-H Day Camps help young people discover their “sparks” – the passions and interests that inspire learning and growth. Through hands-on activities and teen-led experiences, youth build confidence, purpose, and strong relationships with caring mentors. These experiences create motivated, capable young people who contribute positively to their schools and communities, strengthening Delaware’s future.