



# 4-H Exploration Days

June 18 to 20, 2014 (45th year)  
Theme: Unleash Your Inner Scientist

## Audience

This program is for youth ages 11-19. The 2014 attendance totaled 2,486 youth, chaperones and resource people from 77 Michigan counties. This count includes 646 youth males and 1,270 youth females; 11% were people of color.

## Funding

This is a fees-based program with a \$400,000+ budget. Full and partial scholarships are given to those unable to attend without financial assistance.

## Objectives

This youth development conference is designed to:

- Increase youths' responsibility, confidence, independence, accountability, problem-solving, decision-making and time management skills.
- Increase youths' communication, team work, citizenship, and leadership skills.
- Foster participants' ability to meet new people and make new friends from different places and backgrounds.
- Develop and expand career and personal interests.
- Increase college exploration and access to the MSU campus and its resources.
- Develop social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to college and life as an adult.

## Description

Two research-based tenets provide the foundation for this residential program's 30 intentional contact hours: youth development and experiential education. More than 200 action-filled classroom and field trip sessions were offered throughout the MSU campus and at various off-campus locations. Sessions were taught by 267 content and youth development experts (91 MSU faculty/staff, 91 adult volunteers, 18 teen volunteers, and 67 outside resource people). A wide variety of session content areas are available each year such as Animal & Veterinary Science, Business & Entrepreneurship, Careers, Environmental Education, Food, Nutrition & Fitness, International Language & Culture, Money Management, Performing & Visual Arts, and Science, Engineering & Technology.

When not in sessions, participants engaged in meetings, campus activities with a strong science emphasis and tours that give them access to the MSU campus and its wealth of resources. Participants stay in Michigan State University residence halls.

4-H volunteers who served as instructors, session helpers and chaperones collectively contributed nearly 18,000 hours of their time to ensure a successful conference.

## Outcomes

81% (N = 1,544) of youth participants completed the post-conference evaluation. Survey findings indicate that the program increased youth participants' interest in and readiness for college. Highlights include:

94% plan to attend college.

87% said the program better prepared them for college.

87% said the program made them excited to go to college.

87% gained awareness of career and job possibilities related to their skills and interests.

81% increased their knowledge of the different majors, career paths, and opportunities available at MSU.

76% are interested in attending MSU.

The top life skills participants indicated they developed by attending this program were:

91.5% Time management

91.4% Ability to follow through and complete tasks

91.4% Adapting to new living arrangements

91.0% Accepting people who are different from them

91.0% Making decisions and choices

90.8% Being independent

90.2% Socializing and making new friends

Participants rated the following as top program highlights:

85.4% Educational sessions

84.5% Living at MSU

81.7% MSU facility tours and activities

Sample testimonials that reflect views expressed by many:

- It's given me confidence and courage to try new things.
- Everything we did was fun, active, very hands-on and educational!
- It's shown me a variety of career pathways to explore and pursue that I didn't even know existed.
- I learned how to interact with a diverse group of people and accept everyone's differences.
- It influenced me to be more open-minded, evaluate all of my options and make good choices.
- It gets you excited to go to college! I love it here!

## Additional Significant Information

- 4-H Exploration Days participants attend college at a significantly higher rate than their Michigan same-age peers.
- 4-H Exploration Days received the 2012 John Hannah Award for Extension program excellence.

## Contact Information:

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[http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/4\\_h\\_exploration\\_days](http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/4_h_exploration_days)

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