Engaging Youth in Extracurricular Activities

It happens all the time. You run into a friend at the grocery store and they ask, “How are you?” And we respond, “Busy.” Many families are living their lives at 100mph and feeling burned out. Families are constantly being bombarded with flyers for extracurricular activities, such as youth groups, sports, music, clubs, and organizations. If you are like most adults, you may glance at it and the flyer finds its way to the trash or is thrown to the side within minutes of making it home.

Why read the flyer or add one more thing to your already busy life? These activities provide youth with valuable skills in teamwork, responsibility, competition, and diversity. While at the same time providing a sense of belonging, higher self-esteem, and providing an outlet for youth to express themselves. We want youth to have the opportunity to apply their academic skills in a real-world context.

Many know why these activities are important, but how do you pick from the multitude of organizations? Do you pick what your kid is passionate about? Do you participate in an activity because their friend is doing it? Or do you pick an activity based on what your child will gain from it? I feel that all can be valuable discussion points when making this decision.

So, why 4-H? 4-H is the largest youth organization in the world and the only organization that has youth of all ages working together, from 5 to 18 years old. We strive to provide youth with valuable life skills that will benefit them across their lifespan. With 47 project areas to pick from, you can find your passion in our organization, while learning parliamentary procedure, public speaking, and how to become a leader. 4-H is a research-based organization that focuses solely on positive youth development. Our organization is open to everyone and is youth driven.

Positive youth development focuses on creating a developmentally appropriate learning setting for young people. It focuses on building positive relationships between peers and trusted adults and youth. By providing meaningful opportunities in a safe place, we are providing tomorrow’s leaders with valuable life skills to lead for their lifetime.

Youth who participate in 4-H are more likely to engage in positive activities, go to college, be civically engaged in the community, and be less likely to participate in negative risky behavior. As many extracurricular activities incorporate some life skills, 4-H can incorporate them all through different events and project areas.

No matter what extracurricular activity your family chooses, choose one. The benefits outweigh the time commitment it takes. It is our responsibility to set our youth up with success and provide them with those opportunities to gain those life skills.

For more information about River Valley 4-H, please contact Macy Hynek at 785-527-5084 or email her at mhynek@ksu.edu.