Research shows that youth who attend camps during the summer come away with so much more than what camping programs are given credit for.

4-H is intentional in providing critical components of a successful learning experience as part of all its summer camp curriculum. These Essential Elements are: Belonging, Independence, Mastery, and Generosity.  They are designed to meet the developmental needs of youth.  Let me give you some examples.

4-H Camp attendees experience a sense of ***Belonging****,*the first Essential Element*,*while being supported by camp staff, counselors, and 4-H Youth Development Professionals. Campers enjoy being in a safe place with their peers to learn and grow.  4-H accepts youth where they are and helps them ignite the spark that exist within them, enabling them to reach their potential.

 ***Independence****,*the second Essential Element*,* is a key element that a residential or day camp provides for its attendees.  Providing the opportunity for youth to be independent thinkers and to better understand themselves develops at camp as youth learn to make decisions based on experiences and knowledge obtained during camp.

In order to develop the self-confidence needed for youth to feel they can be successful, camp provides many opportunities for ***Mastery****,*the third Essential Element*,* to take place. Whether it is passing the swim test, learning a new skill, or leading a game, having that “I can do this” moment for a camper can make a positive impact on a young person’s life.

Lastly, 4-H camps provide opportunities for youth to learn the importance of **Generosity**, the fourth Essential Element, by learning and working with campers who may be different than themselves. Through planned program curriculum consisting of team building and get acquainted activities throughout the week, the campers learn to focus on what they have in common and to value the contributions of others who may not look or act like them.

So being away from home, making new friends, being a part of a team, and trying new things are key building blocks to obtaining a successful experience to meet the developmental needs of youth. 4-H summer camp provides youth the platform to create great memories and lasting relationships that can last a lifetime. Adapted from Marcus Boston Jr. University of Florida Extension