In 2016, the state’s $60.2 million investment in MSU AgBioResearch and MSU Extension generated more than $1 billion for Michigan residents. Every dollar the state invested in AgBioResearch and MSU Extension leveraged an additional $2.68 in federal funds and external contracts, grants and other revenues, including nearly $1.1 million leveraged by MSU Extension children and youth programs alone. As a result, MSU Extension and MSU AgBioResearch are able to serve Michigan residents with a benefit/cost ratio of 19:1 when adding in other social and economic benefits too.

These cost benefits are huge, but they are not the only benefits that MSU Extension brings to the state. Through MSU Extension 4-H Youth Development, more than 209,000 youth learn compassion, respect, leadership skills, responsibility, the value of hard work and other critical abilities. In addition, MSU Extension early childhood education programs prepare thousands of Michigan’s youngest children for school success.

“The issue
In today’s globally connected world, youth face a number of challenges that will affect their families, communities and future careers. Unfortunately, young people are not often engaged in addressing these critical issues, nor are they taught the skills necessary to make a difference. In order to build active and informed individuals who have the ability and desire to make an impact in today’s multicultural world, youth need the opportunity to respond to emerging issues through civic engagement and volunteerism. They also need experiences that equip them with the skills necessary to step up as leaders that understand and respect the culture of others.

MSU Extension Action
Michigan State University (MSU) Extension is helping to develop youth as current and future leaders by providing programs that instill young people with the knowledge and skills to become positive agents of change. These programs focus on leadership development, civic education and engagement, global citizenship and cultural competencies that help youth build a commitment to civic service and responsibility while cultivating their capacity to lead as members of a multicultural world. In the 2015-16 program year, Michigan youth participated in nearly 88,000 of these types of Michigan 4-H experiences.

The Impact
Through experiences and trainings that teach youth how to run a meeting, deal with conflict, understand the public policy process, understand other cultures, work collaboratively with people of various leadership styles and personalities, and more, MSU Extension 4-H is growing current and future leaders who contribute to their communities, country and world. In comparison to before their 4-H experiences, youth showed significant increases in a variety of skills after their involvement in leadership and civic engagement related 4-H programs. In particular, youth showed:

“Some people may have the same idea as you and others may not, but working together will get you where you want to be.”

- Youth participant in 4-H leadership and civic engagement program
• Statistically significant increases in skills related to conflict resolution and facilitation. Specifically, they showed a:

- 25% increase in those who indicated they were able to work things out when others disagreed with them.
- 22% increase in those who reported they could help a group come to a united decision.

• Statistically significant increases in skills related to civic participation. Among the specific examples are a:

- 40% increase in those who reported they could contact someone they had never met before to get their help with a problem.
- 29% increase in those who said they were prepared to work towards change in their community.

• Statistically significant increases in leadership and communication skills. Examples include a:

- 30% increase in those who reported they could run a meeting.
- 35% increase in those who said they could repeat what was said to them in order to ensure their understanding.

In addition to helping youth develop these important civic engagement and leadership competencies, MSU Extension also provided 4-H’ers with the opportunity to explore new cultures through innovative programs such as the 4-H China Art Exchange and International Exchange programs, of which more than 6,400 youth participated.

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For one young person, the event was truly spectacular: “This kind of conference is what contributes something big to my life and career. It inspired me to join the volunteer group in my town and go make a difference.”