**Benefits of 4-H Youth Camping**

**At the W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center**

**What is the purpose of 4-H camping?**
- 4-H camping is cooperative group living in a natural environment that focuses on developing life skills, social, spiritual, mental, and physical development in young people.
- 4-H camping emphasizes “learning by doing.”

**Who participates?**
- More than 6,100 youth ages 5 to 18 are involved in the Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Educational Conference Center programming each year.
- 872 teen and adult 4-H volunteer leaders support, supervise, and teach those youth.

**How are youth involved?**
- The Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Educational Conference Center provides opportunities for youth in four ways: 4-H residential camping, 4-H specialty/day camping, 4-H school enrichment, and environmental education based upon the Virginia Standards of Learning.

**What type of educational programming is provided?**
- The Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Educational Conference Center programs include leadership development, environmental and aquatic science, performing arts, shooting education, forestry, outdoor adventure, computer science, low ropes course, climbing, primitive skills, arts and crafts, horsemanship and animal science, journalism and broadcasting, wildlife, canoeing, fishing, outdoor sports, ceramics, and swimming.

**How do youth benefit from 4-H camping?**
- Youth have the opportunity to learn and have fun in a safe environment while surrounded by caring adults.
- A study of Virginia 4-H camping conducted in 2002 with 11,000 youth campers ages 9 to 13 from across the state found that 4-H camp participation helped youth to learn to:
  - Make new friends,
  - Develop new skills, and
  - Become more independent and able to take care of themselves.
- A study of 363 parents/guardians of Virginia 4-H campers conducted in 2001 found that 4-H camp participation changed youths’ behaviors in the areas of:
  - Taking care of their own things (self-responsibility),
  - Becoming more independent/taking initiative, and
  - Sharing.

For more information:
- Contact your local Extension Office.
- Contact the Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Educational Conference Center at (540) 721-2759 or www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/smithmt.