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4-Hers engage in a science experiment.

Improving Life Skills

THROUGH 4-H

COULD BOTTLE-FEEDING BABY GOATS help to increase a young caregiver's life skills? A new study says that it can.

The four-year study, conducted by faculty members in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, evaluated 1,190 Pennsylvania youths before and after they participated in Penn State Cooperative Extension's 4-H activities.

The youths, aged 7 to 17, completed a survey that demonstrated their life skills improved after participation in projects ranging from animal science to expressive arts to citizenship. For example, communication abilities increased by 10 percent, and goal-setting proficiency climbed 11 percent. The survey also showed that 4-H participants were more likely to engage in civic activities.

Dr. Daniel Perkins, who conducted the study with Dr. Claudia C. Mincemoyer, is an advisory board member for a similar national study led by Tufts University.

"These findings correlated to the Tufts survey conducted in 25 states," said Perkins. That study of positive youth development involved more than 4,000 youth and 2,000 parents.

BUILDING SMART *for the Elderly*

A "SMART" HOUSE that can remind the elderly to take medications, track when they turn on the stove and monitor visitors is under development at Blueroof Technologies Inc., a McKeesport, Pa.-based nonprofit corporation co-founded by Bob Wal-

ters, a Penn State Greater Allegheny engineering professor.

A model cottage has already been constructed in Blueroof's McKeesport Independence Zone (McKIZ), a 10-acre site designated for the homes.

"We will have about 15 new smart, accessible, affordable and green homes in McKIZ when it is finished in three years," said Walters. He and John Bertoty, a retired high school principal, started the company to benefit McKeesport's elderly and disabled and create jobs in the region.

Walters has recruited help across Penn State, working with the Smart Spaces Center at University



A simple cottage can provide independence.

Park, a multi-disciplinary program to develop spaces that will enable people to live safely and independently in their own homes as long as possible.

Students at Penn State Greater Allegheny assist with installing wiring, designing prototypes of smart projects to integrate into the houses, and gathering input from senior citizens about technology use that can benefit them in their own homes. "We can then provide the technology to bridge the gap between what they want to do and what they can do," said Bertoty.