

## **SITUATION**

The 2010 U.S. Census shows Weld County's population of youth 5-17 years old is 50,565 representing a 38% increase from 2000 to 2010. The Latino youth population increased by 46% during the same time period. 4-H enrollment in the traditional 4-H Club program has remained consistent at about 900 members. The number of 4-H Full Time Equivalent (FTE) has decreased from 3 FTE to 2.25 during that time. Today a smaller percentage of Weld County youth receive the 4-H experience compared to ten years ago.

According to a 2005 Justice Institute Study it cost \$161 per day to place a youth in a Juvenile correctional center. Comparatively, it only costs \$.60 per day to support one youth in the 4-H program. Also according to a 2005 Juvenile crimes report 3 out 100 youth Weld County youth have been arrested for committing a crime.

Weld County is ranked number eight among counties in the nation in agricultural production with an annual income of 1.54 billion dollars. The 2007 Census of Agriculture reported the average age of American farmers is 58 years old. For everyone one farmer under the age of 25 there are five over the age of 75. Also a Northern Colorado Regional Food System Assessment article reported 27 percent of Weld County Farms' principle operators are over 64 years old and 25 percent are between the ages of 54 to 64.

## **CONCLUSION**

4-H is a positive youth development program with a proven track record of impacting youth to become productive citizens who give back to their communities. Furthermore, youth involved in 4-H are less likely to become involved in a destructive life style or commit a crime. If 4-H keeps one out of 100 youth from entering a juvenile correction center, the savings to society would be \$160.40 per day, or \$58,546/year. 4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential. Youth who participate in 4-H get what young people need to succeed in life: confidence, compassion, connections with caring adults, and skills and opportunities to make contributions to their communities.

To maintain Weld County's strong agriculture economy young people need to develop skills in production agriculture and leadership. The 4-H program has a strong history of developing these skills and can met future needs.