

Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Cortland County



4-H Youth Development
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New 4-H Family Handbook



This book belongs to _____

Family. We are members of the

_____ 4-H Club.

Our club leader is

_____.

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

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Thank you to Montana State University Extension Service, University of Idaho Extension and Columbia and Greene Counties Extension for enabling us to use their publication – with local updates only.

*Welcome to the exciting world of 4-H.
We are pleased to have you and your child involved in
4-H and encourage you to truly make 4-H a family affair. As
the parent of a 4-H member, you will have the opportunity to be actively
involved in helping your child and others to learn & grow. Taking an active
interest in your child's projects and activities will dramatically affect their
overall sense of accomplishment. When questions about 4-H arise or you
need additional information; please visit with your child's club
leader or the local Extension Office staff.*



What is the primary objective of 4-H?

The basic philosophy of 4-H is to strengthen the mental, physical, moral and social development of boys and girls, thereby helping youth to develop into competent, committed and self-assured adults. The main objective is the personal development of youth through participation in projects, events, and wholesome activities.

4-H is intended to *supplement, not replace*, other learning experiences young people may have through other institutions.

4-H is for everyone, regardless of race, color, creed, age, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation or parental status.

Why and when did 4-H originate?

What we recognize today as 4-H, began around 1900 as a means of reaching parents with improved farm and home practices. Educators had discovered that while most adults were reluctant to experiment with new advances in technology, they were willing to allow their children to do so on a limited basis. Once adults observed the positive results, they moved quickly to accept/implement these innovations.

The first organized 4-H clubs were small groups covering a single topic—corn production or canning tomatoes and other garden crops.

4-H Fun Facts

4-H is open to any boy or girl, ages 5 – 18, regardless of whether they live in the country, on a farm, in small towns or large cities.

4-H is an informal educational program, led by volunteers, that supplements what youth learn at home or in school.

Have 4-H objectives changed over the years?

Absolutely! After “teaching improved practices to farmers and homemakers through their children”, came World War I and the “food for victory” campaign. Following that war, “keep them on the farm” became the primary objective. Food production was emphasized again during World War II.

Today our objective focuses the personal development of boys and girls, providing a wide variety of learning opportunities in which all youth can participate. The 4-H program offers something for every interest, whether youth live in the city or on the farm.

Beliefs About 4-H

- The 4-H member is significantly more important than their project.
- Project work is one of the best devices for developing young people. To “Learn By Doing” is fundamental in any sound educational program and is a primary characteristic of the 4-H program.
- 4-H’ers should be their own best exhibit. This means in regards to their personal manners, attitudes, and courtesy, as well as appropriate dress and physical appearance.
- No award is worth sacrificing the reputation of a 4-H member or leader over.
- Competition is a part of life and should be recognized in 4-H as a human trait, but competition requires careful planning and safeguards when used as an educational tool.
- A blue ribbon 4-H’er with a red ribbon exhibit is more desirable than a red ribbon 4-H’er with a blue ribbon exhibit.
- Every 4-H member needs to be noticed, to feel important, to achieve some degree of success, and to be praised.
- It is the responsibility of 4-H leaders and staff to guide 4-H members in learning how to think, not what to think.

4-H Teaches Life Skills

4-H helps youth develop a variety of abilities they can use every day – what we refer to as “life skills.” All our educational programs are designed to ensure that youth develop the confidence, competence and desirable personal characteristics to become:

- * critical thinkers
- * organized managers
- * caring human beings
- * responsible citizens
- * adaptable to change
- * self-motivated
- * socially articulate
- * connected to others in the community

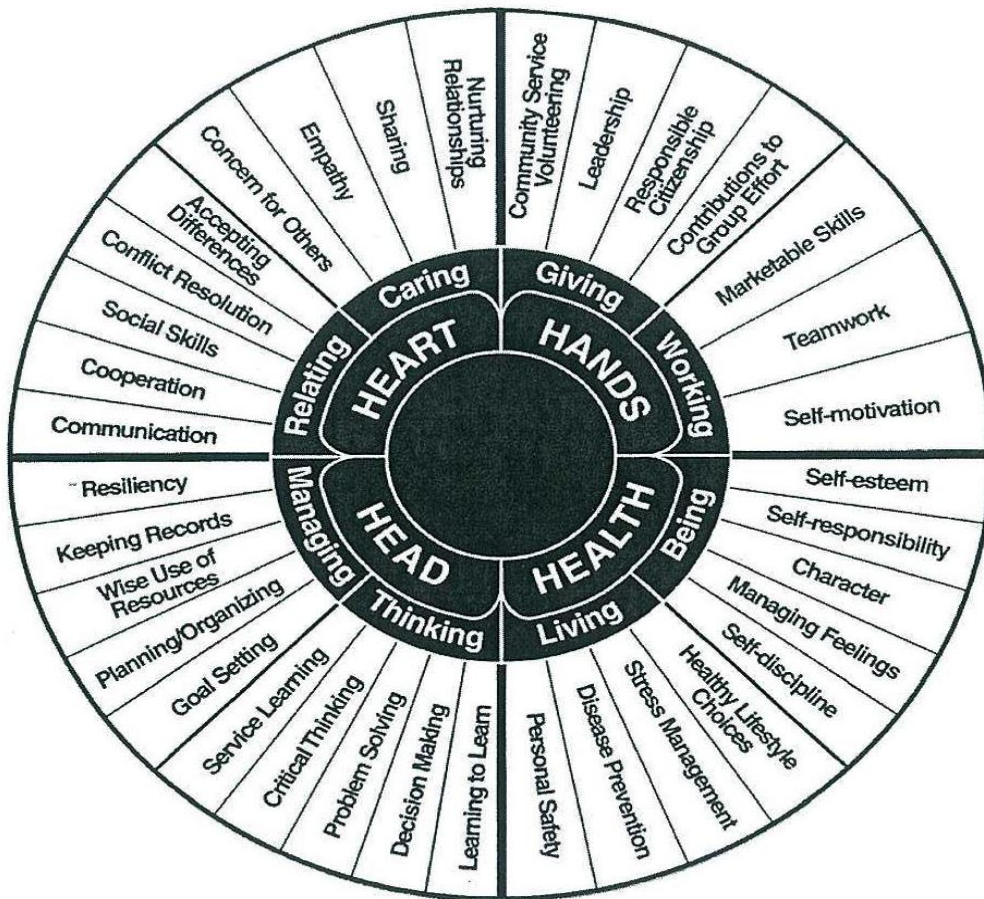
Developing Life Skills

Youth development is a process of mental, physical and social growth during which young people prepare to live a productive and satisfying life. High-quality youth development experiences don't just happen. The best experiences are those that are carefully and thoughtfully planned to:

1. Encourage life skill development while delivering subject-matter content.
2. Achieve specific outcomes.

A skill is the learned ability to do something well. Life skills are those that help an individual become successful in living a productive and fulfilling life. The Targeting Life Skills model (below) categorizes life skills in relationship with the four "H's" that represent Head, Heart, Hands and Health.

Each "H" is divided into two general Life Skills categories; which then have several specific life skills related to that category radiating out from it. These are among the various life skills that well-designed 4-H projects and events are designed to address and develop. When working with youth within 4-H, it is always important to remember that the development of the person is always more important than the result of the item produced or ribbon placing received.



Acknowledgment: Targeting Life Skills Model, by Pat Hendricks, Iowa State University

How do young people learn in 4-H?

4-H utilizes the “learn by doing” model. Youth, with guidance from adult volunteer leaders, are involved in “hands on” experiences where they gain useful skills and learn with people and serve their community and country by practicing these skills in real-life situations. Each 4-H member can learn by choosing to participate in a variety of opportunities, including:

- **Project Work.** Project work helps members gain knowledge and skills and learn to take responsibility for their decisions. By working on projects at home, members can develop stronger relationships with their parents (*Parents: be supportive and help guide your child; don't try to do their work for them*).
- **Oral Presentations.** The process where youth show and tell others how to do something they have learned is called an oral presentation. Members gain personal confidence in their public speaking skills; this is one of the first steps in developing personal leadership abilities.
- **Record Keeping.** The ability to keep accurate records is an essential life skill. By making timely entries in their 4-H record books, members learn good record keeping skills. These records help members evaluate and learn from their 4-H experiences, and develop business sense skills. Members are required to keep records on every project in which they are enrolled.
- **Recreation.** Members learn to enjoy life, balance work with leisure time, and develop social skills through their interactions with others. It can also provide opportunities to teach leadership skills.
- **Contests.** Through their participation in contests members can learn cooperative and competitive skills, along with standards of excellence. Awards may be provided in recognition of their efforts.
- **Exhibits.** Members may choose to exhibit their project results at the county fair or some other public setting. Exhibiting 4-H projects enables the public to learn what 4-H'ers are doing, helps members learn how they can improve their work, and gives members a sense of pride and accomplishment.
- **4-H Camp.** Many counties provide 4-H camping experiences where members take part in educational and recreational experiences as they learn more about nature and living with people.
- **Service Learning.** Developing a sense of compassion towards others and willingness to participate in activities which benefit other individuals or their community is what service learning is all about.

4-H Fun Facts

4-H is a research-based youth development program, conducted in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the State Land-Grant University and your local county government officials.

- **4-H Ambassadors.** Targeting older members; the 4-H Ambassador program develops leadership and public speaking skills, enabling these youth to become more effective 4-H advocates within their respective communities and counties.
- **4-H Exchanges.** Exchanges are arranged with clubs from different counties or other states. Exchanges help 4-H'ers develop a broader knowledge of people and living situations and provide the chance for creating lasting friendships. Some international exchanges are also available.
- **Recognition and Awards.** Youth are recognized and rewarded in a variety of ways for work they do. These may range from acceptance by peers and leaders to ribbons, certificates, trips and scholarships.
- **Fund Raising.** Members will be asked to contribute in club fund raising efforts; which enables the club to offer additional educational opportunities. The skills learned in these fund raising activities add to the member's leadership and organizational skills and may influence career choices. While 4-H is assisted with some public funds, private funds are essential to the operation of the 4-H program.
- **4-H Club.** In club meetings, 4-H members can learn how to conduct effective meetings utilizing parliamentary procedure, the value that committees play in accomplishing club goals, and cooperative skills through social interaction with club members.

Who is responsible for administering the local 4-H program?

Your local county Extension Educator and their staff are ultimately responsible for overseeing the 4-H program, including making decisions regarding any changes related to local policies and procedures. Your county Extension Office is a great resource, and will want to be in contact with the office staff when you have questions. In each county, the Extension System is a cooperative undertaking by the United States Department of Agriculture, the state land-grant university, and local county government officials (commissioners, supervisors, etc.).



The Extension System carries up-to-date information from the land-grant university classrooms and laboratories to the people of the state and takes back to the university those problems in counties that can be solved only by careful study and research. State Extension specialists support the work of county Extension personnel.

The Extension System is designed to provide instruction and practical research-based information in agriculture, family and consumer science, 4-H youth development, and community resource development to all citizens. In addition, the resources of the land-grant university can be requested to provide assistance in finding solutions to major issues within a community.

Section 2:

What is a 4-H Club?

Community 4-H clubs (once authorized by local Extension personnel) consist of an organized groups of boys and girls, with officers appropriate to the group, and under the supervision of one or more certified volunteer leaders. Clubs are frequently organized within a neighborhood, a school, a business or other location. The club size should be suitable to the age of the members, meeting place and leadership available. These clubs are encouraged to conduct at least one community outreach (service learning) project annually to benefit underprivileged individuals or other groups within their community.

In addition to Community 4-H clubs, youth may opt to participate through special interest groups/project clubs that focus on one specific topic, school enrichment or after-school programs.

4-H Motto

“TO MAKE THE BEST BETTER”

4-H Emblem

The 4-H emblem is a green four-leaf clover with a white letter “H” on each leaf, standing for head, heart, hands, and health. The United States Congress has established specific restrictions regarding use of the 4-H emblem. Check with your local Extension Office for specific regulations.

4-H Colors

The 4-H colors are green and white. Green symbolizes nature’s most common color and represents life, springtime and youth. White symbolizes purity.

4-H Pledge

I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world.





The 4-H Creed

I believe in boys' and girls' 4-H club work for the opportunity it gives me to become a useful citizen.

I believe in the training of my HEAD for the power it will give me to THINK, PLAN, AND REASON.

I believe in the training of my HEART for the nobleness it will give me to be KIND, SYMPATHETIC, and TRUE.

I believe in the training of my HANDS for the ability it will give me to be HELPFUL, USEFUL, AND SKILLFULL.

I believe in the training of my HEALTH for the strength it will give me to ENJOY LIFE, RESIST DISEASE, AND WORK EFFICIENTLY.

I believe in my Country, my State, and in my Community, and in my responsibility for their development.

In all these things I believe, and I am willing to dedicate my efforts to their fulfillment.

4-H Program Year

The 4-H program year begins October 1 and runs through September 30 of the following year.

4-H Fun Facts

In 4-H, your child will learn a wide variety of valuable life skills, including:

- Responsibility
- Citizenship
- Leadership
- Communication
- Sportsmanship

Age for Membership

Membership age is based on the individual's age as of January 1st of the current 4-H year. Youth 5-7 years of age are eligible to participate in the non-competitive division called Cloverbuds. Members age 8-18 may participate in all aspects, including competitive events.

Scope

Each of the 50 states and over 60 foreign countries offer 4-H programs or their equivalent. In addition, 4-H has established partnerships with the U.S. Army and now has programs available on most installations around the world.

Section 3:

4-H Club Meetings

What are the purposes of 4-H club meetings?

Each 4-H club meeting should be designed to help youth:

- Acquire new information
- Learn to use leisure time creatively
- Develop social skills
- Acquire leadership and citizenship traits
- Learn to conduct meetings

Meetings enable 4-H members to learn and practice decision-making and leadership skills in a group setting by using the knowledge and skills acquired at these meetings. Each 4-H member is expected to attend all club meetings. **Parents are strongly encouraged to attend meetings with their children.** Parental involvement demonstrates support for 4-H members, keeps them informed on club activities, and enables them to actively assist leaders as requested. Remember, 4-H is a family affair!

What is a club meeting like?

Each 4-H meeting normally last 1 to 1 ½ hours and includes business, educational programs, and recreation (*see the meeting planning diagram on the following page*). Clubs may meet monthly or at any time determined by the club members. Meetings may include a variety of the following items:

Business Sessions: The business portion of the meeting should be short and snappy. It is a small democracy in action with members learning how to conduct meetings effectively, work with others through committee assignments, and cooperate with others in making decisions.

Educational Programs: This part of the meeting is designed to help members learn more about subjects of general interest to the membership. 4-H teaching is unique—it is “learn by doing.” Generally, the educational program will include talks and demonstrations by the members. Outside speakers may also be requested to present programs at club meetings.



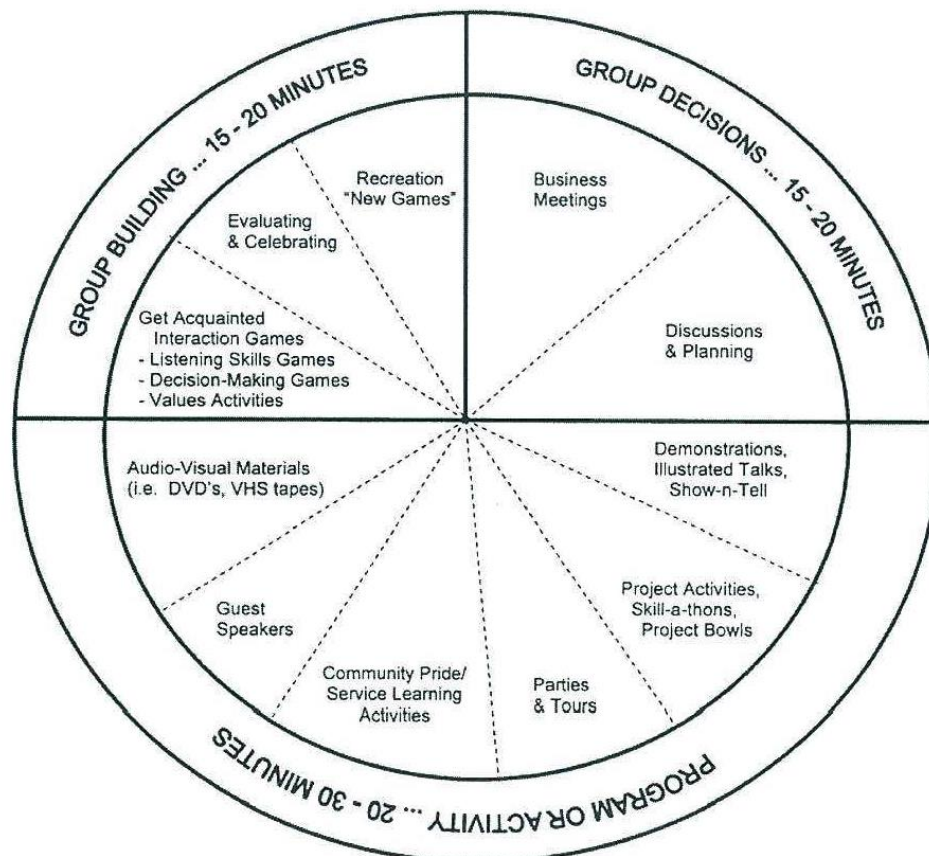
Demonstrations: Demonstrations allow members to show other members some of the things they have learned, using the actual articles to “show and tell” the steps necessary to complete the finished product.

Illustrated Talks: Illustrated talks differ from demonstrations in that they utilize charts or other visual aids to tell about the given subject rather than physically showing the actual steps.

Project Talks/Speeches: Project talks provide members an opportunity to share information or some experience related to one of their projects and may use props/visual aids. In speeches, members speak about a topic without using any visual aids to assist in their presentation.

Recreation: The recreation portion of the meeting distinguishes the 4-H meeting from other educational activities. Recreation may include challenges, group singing, relays, guessing games, singing games, active games, and quiet games.

Refreshments: Some clubs serve refreshments at meetings, although this is not essential. Usually different families serve as hosts each month, providing members experience in learning to select, prepare, and serve the refreshments. Emphasis should be placed on selecting simple, inexpensive, nutritious refreshments and how to serve them. Parents should help by giving suggestions and guidance.



{Note: this format may need to be adjusted based on the type of activity or age of group members.}

Do meetings just happen??

Effective meetings require advanced planning. Successful clubs get ideas from the members, then utilizing creative thinking and initiative, work to develop an annual club plan for meeting schedules and educational programs early in the club year.

Usually, the initial program planning is done by the club officers with guidance from organizational leaders and club parents. This plan is then presented back to the entire club for review, modification and approval. The specific content will vary from club to club.



Who conducts the meetings?

The goal within each 4-H club should be that the officers elected at the beginning of the 4-H year should be responsible for conducting meetings; organizational leaders or the club officer advisor will want to work with them to help officers develop leadership skills and assist them in developing agendas. Most clubs normally elect a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and reporter/historian. Other officers may be elected, depending on the individual club (i.e. recreation leader, song leader, etc.).

Who provides leadership?

Adults and teens provide guidance and serve as coaches for club and project work. Parents are usually the best source of adult leaders-but not the only source. Parents of former 4-H'ers, retired people, and other young adults are often willing to help the 4-H'ers. Teens may take on key leadership roles with younger members, under the supervision of authorized volunteer project leaders.

Occasionally, members and parents sometime become so focused on the project and subject-matter, that they forget the importance that club meetings play in the overall personal development of the member. Leaders play an integral role in helping families focus on the importance of well-rounded youth involvement within 4-H. Carrying out a project does provide members with various educational experiences that help them to “learn by doing” as well as discovering “why” things happen the way they do.

4-H Fun Facts

The 4-H program is the largest out-of-school program in the nation with nearly 7 million members; and 4-H programs are found in over 60 countries around the world.

Section 4:

4-H Projects

Why projects?

Projects are one of the *teaching tools* utilized to facilitate the development of positive life skills, in addition to the project knowledge. It is essential to recognize that although the focus may appear to be on subject-matter knowledge, the development of the individual is the most important purpose of 4-H.

What are projects?

Projects are a series of “hands-on” experiences where members are actively involved in learning both subject-matter and personal development skills, such as decision-making, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, etc. And of course, they are designed to be FUN.

Numerous project areas exist which provide an array of educational experiences. Most projects have several phases so that a member may advance to more difficult and challenging activities as they develop their knowledge and skills. A wide variety of interests and activities are designed to attract members regardless of their place of residence, economic status, or race.



4-H projects are designed to:

- Create a sense of ownership
- Give a feeling of achievement
- Strengthen family and community ties
- Provide members the opportunity to:
 - learn project skills
 - develop and understand project knowledge
 - develop good attitudes
 - assume responsibility
 - participate in healthful competition
 - make meaningful decisions
- Provide leisure time activities
- Encourage members to explore career opportunities and discover what additional continued educational training would be needed. Through these experiences, members get a taste of the work and responsibilities involved within that field.

How do you select projects?

Projects are selected early in the 4-H year as enrollment forms are completed. To increase the opportunity for members to succeed and have a positive experience, it is important that families know and fully understand what is expected of the 4-H member before enrolling in a project.

For new or younger members, it is generally wise for parents to limit members to enrolling in just one or two projects to insure sufficient time to successfully complete their project. Older, experienced members usually are able to complete several different projects, including those that are more difficult.



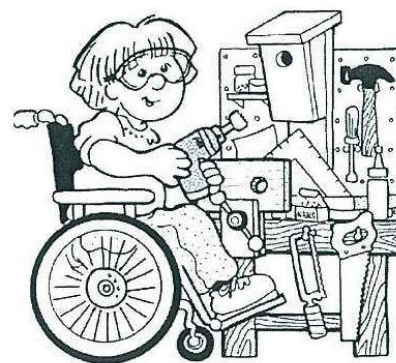
When selecting a project consider:

- Does the project meet the needs and interests of the member?
- Is the project appropriate based on the age and ability (physical and mental) of the member? Will it challenge him or her educationally?
- How much time does the member have and how much time does the project require? During which season of the year will most of the project activities be accomplished?
- Is the project acceptable to you as parents and does it fit into the family needs and situation?
- How much will the project cost?
- Is adequate space and equipment available at home?
- What are the opportunities for ownership and management responsibilities?
- Does your club have a leader(s) to help with the project? Are you willing to become a project leader if necessary?

How is project work accomplished?

Projects can be completed in various ways, including activities and events such as:

- Local club project meetings
- Demonstrations/talks at club meetings
- Tours
- Family activities or work at home
- Exhibiting at shows or fairs
- Record keeping



Project leadership is provided by authorized adult and teen volunteer leaders.

Section 5:

4-H Parents and Members

Parents make the difference in 4-H!

Parents and families play a critical role in the success of the 4-H program. Youth join 4-H to belong, to do things with their friends, to meet new friends, to have fun, to be recognized as a person, and to achieve. It is much easier for youth to succeed in 4-H and continue to grow when they have parental support and understanding. *The leader can do only so much; children need the support of their parents.*

Parents are encouraged to attend both club and project meetings with their child. It is essential that parents serve as effective role models by helping youth keep commitments they make, assisting them to think through decisions, and see that they continue working toward achieving their goals.

4-H is truly a family affair. Youth need adult guidance to encourage and direct them in their character development. As a parent, you can be a project leader, activity leader, camp chaperone, or even a club leader. All parents are encouraged to assume some responsibility within the local 4-H club because all adults are busy. Share the load!

Why parents need to be involved:

A successful 4-H program takes the combined efforts of parents, volunteer leaders, and Extension professionals – great youth programs “just don’t happen.” Parents are essential partners on the 4-H team as we strive to provide quality, positive youth development opportunities. Active involvement and commitment is needed by each and every player for a team to be successful; parents included. Please don’t let your 4-H team down – they are counting on you.

Research has repeatedly shown that parental participation in 4-H has many benefits, including:



- 4-H'ers do better work when they receive more personal attention from parents and leaders.
- Parents can encourage a “learn by doing” approach where they “coach” their child in activities.
- Families are strengthened when parents and children participate together in areas of common interest.
- 4-H clubs become stronger and more vibrant when parents take an active role in 4-H.

How to be a 4-H MVP (Most Valuable Parent):

- Learn what 4-H is all about; keep informed on what is happening in your club and county.
- Show a genuine interest in 4-H and your child.
- Attend 4-H meetings and activities with your child; encourage your child to participate in 4-H events.
- Make 4-H a priority in your home – read your 4-H mail promptly, and mark 4-H activities on your calendar.
- Provide encouragement and help in your child’s project work with record keeping, demonstrations, judging, and completion of attempted work – without doing the work yourself.
- Provide transportation to local club meetings, activities, and county-wide events.
- Provide a meeting place for a project group. Assist leaders by providing refreshments or other help.
- Share your special talents by volunteering to be a project leader.
- Help members select, finance, and manage their projects. There are minimal costs required for project literature and materials.
- Help leaders conduct project work.
- Help leaders locate and secure other qualified adults to assist with project work or 4-H activities.



Remember: 4-H members are the focus!

The 4-H program utilizes the “learning by doing” approach as we work to develop the potential of each 4-H member. This means that 4-H members and their families must assume a greater level of responsibility for their own learning and involvement in program opportunities. To get the greatest benefit out of 4-H, members need to:

- Attend and participate in all club and project meetings
- Support and work on club level activities and events
- Participate in county, district, state and/or national activities and events that enhance project learning
- Keep up-to-date on project-related work
- Exhibit pride in being a 4-H member



Section 6: Who's Who in 4-H

Local/Club Level

4-H member – Any young person who participates in an Extension-sponsored youth educational program. Cloverbuds is for youth 5-7 years of age as of January 1st, while youth age 8-18 (or still in high school) participate in the more advanced, competitive program offerings. Each member completes an annual enrollment form.

4-H Organizational Leader – this adult(s) is responsible for overseeing the local 4-H Club operations, including enrollments, scheduling officer meetings, etc.

4-H Project Leader -- the adult or teen leader is responsible for providing subject-matter guidance within a given project area of the local 4-H club.

Teen Leaders – Youth who actively assist the adult leaders. They should be viewed as assets to the 4-H program. Each 4-H club is encouraged to utilize youth as valued partners within their organization.



4-H Resource Leader – This person has a specific skill or talent and is willing to share that with youth from one or more groups, but has chosen not to become an organizational or project leader. These leaders could also judge at 4-H events or may be other people who prefer not to become involved in other parts of the 4-H program due to scheduling or other time constraints.

Middle Manager or Key Leaders – Adults who assist local 4-H club leaders and/or Extension personnel in a specific 4-H project or activity area.

County level

4-H Leaders' Association – A committee composed of leaders and older teens that serve in an advisory role to local Extension personnel. They may assist in assessing the needs, interests, concerns of the county's youth, and assist the Extension staff in responding with educational programs relevant to those needs. Leaders' Council membership usually includes all 4-H leaders within the county.

County 4-H Foundation – Some counties have this non-profit organization working to provide additional resources for the 4-H program. They receive monies from private sources, raise funds for special activities, and sponsor scholarships.

Extension personnel – These educators, program coordinators and program assistants are paid professionals who manage local 4-H program operations and ultimately establish local policies & procedures. Most personnel are members of their state land-grant university and are responsible for the educational programs that are conducted through the local Extension Offices.

State level

State 4-H Youth Development Specialists – These people have responsibility for the 4-H program on a statewide basis. The State 4-H office is housed on the Cornell University campus in Ithaca.

Cornell University – As part of the land-grant system, Cornell University has the responsibility for taking education to the people of the state. The 4-H/Youth Development program is part of the Extension System, which provides leadership for this educational outreach directive.

NYS 4-H Foundation – This non-profit organization works to provide additional resources for the statewide 4-H program. They sponsor scholarships and funding for programs as well as providing special activities.



The 4-H Members

*Some members work to keep clubs strong,
While others join just to belong.
Some dig in, some serve with pride,
Some go along just for the ride.
Some volunteer to do their share.
Some lie back and just don't care.
Some do their best, some help, some make,
Some give nothing, only take.
Some greet new members with a smile,
And make their coming more worthwhile.
While some go on their merry way,
And rarely have kid words to say.
Some help their leaders do and show
When asked to help, they don't say no.
Some drag, some pull, some don't, some do.
Consider, which of these are you?*

-Author Unknown

Remember -- 4-H Is

A part of your state's Land-Grant University Extension System working cooperatively with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and local governments throughout the country that promotes learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. 4-H members are those youth who participate in Extension-sponsored educational programs that are open to all youth regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, or parental status.

Our goal within 4-H is to educate youth & adults to prepare them for life in an ever-changing global society, by effectively utilizing the resources of the Land-Grant University system and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The 4-H program uses educational, learning-by-doing projects, club meetings, community/service learning projects, various events and activities for young people and adults as they work toward attaining these five **Life Skills**:

- Fostering a positive self-concept
- Learning decision-making and accepting responsibility for their choices
- Developing an inquiring mind
- Effectively relating to self and others
- Acquiring a concern for their communities – both local and global

The emblem of the 4-H program is a green four-leaf clover with a white “H” on each leaf. These four “H’s” stand for Head, Heart, Hands and Health, and represent various ways of developing these five life skills.

Head: Learning to think, make wise decisions, understanding “why” things happen, gain new and valuable insights and knowledge.

Heart: Being concerned with the well-being of others, accepting responsibilities for citizenship in our local and global communities, determining values and attitudes by which to live, and learning how to work with others.

Hands: Learning new skills, improving on existing skills, instilling pride in current work and respect for work accomplished.

Health: Practice healthy living habits, protecting the welfare of self and others, making constructive use of leisure time.

This four-fold development is vital to every individual. All four of the “H’s” should be an important part of the goals youth identify as they participate in 4-H sponsored programs and educational activities.

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& 4-H Horse Program

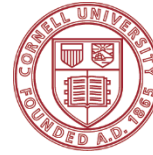
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If you have special needs related to program participation, please contact the office in advance.

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