

# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF 4-H

BASICS FOR NEW LEADERS



# Opportunities for 4-H Leaders

## Key ideas

- Leader opportunities at the county, state, regional, and national levels
- Youth as resources
- Other resources for 4-H leaders

**A**s you feel comfortable with one aspect of the program, you'll want to challenge yourself to take on new leadership experiences. You've probably discovered that, along with your members, you, too, are gaining new knowledge.

Many opportunities are available for 4-H leaders to learn more about the 4-H program, make new friends, and develop additional skills. Your local 4-H newsletter announces and describes these activities as they occur.

## Opportunities at the local level

**New 4-H leader workshops/meetings.** You already may have attended a new 4-H leader workshop/meeting with your local Extension staff, community coordinator, or other volunteer. If not, find out from your local Extension office when the next meeting will be held.

**Project leader meetings.** One of the best ways to become familiar with the 4-H program and to find out what other leaders are doing with their clubs is to attend 4-H leader meetings. Some counties have project leader meetings (e.g., livestock leaders, home economics leaders, horse leaders, small-animal leaders, expressive arts leaders, etc.).

Not only will you find these meetings helpful and informative, but other leaders will appreciate your ideas and assistance.

**County 4-H activities.** Consider becoming a member of a planning committee or a volunteer organizer of one of the many local 4-H activities, such as: fair superintendent or assistant, judge's clerk, contest coordinator, fundraising committee, workshop director, or summer camp staff.

4-H leaders are the key to a successful 4-H program. Leaders who take an active part in county 4-H activities not only help the program succeed, but find they become more effective leaders while developing their own skills.

**County 4-H leaders advisory committee.** Many counties have an organized group of leaders who meet on a regular basis to discuss the county 4-H program, review 4-H activities, conduct 4-H program fundraising, and provide program advice to the county staff. This group may be called the "County 4-H Leaders Advisory Committee," the "County 4-H Leaders Council," or the "County 4-H Leaders Association."

### Scholarship assistance.

Some counties have limited scholarship assistance available for leaders who apply for local, state, regional, or national workshops. Information is available at your local Extension office.



## Opportunities at the state level

**State 4-H Leaders Forum.** There are a number of statewide 4-H activities in which volunteer leaders may become involved. One of these is the State 4-H Leaders Forum. This is an educational activity held every 1–2 years for adult leaders and older youth involved in leadership positions. The Forum features workshops that focus on general leadership skill development and specific 4-H project areas.

**State development committees.** The state 4-H staff works through development committees in many project areas. These advisory committees assist the staff with project curriculum development and activity planning. The membership on these committees is usually composed of county Extension staff, volunteer leaders, and older 4-H members. After you've been a leader long enough to become familiar with the program, you might be interested in serving on one of these committees. Talk with your local Extension staff about involvement on statewide committees.

**State 4-H Leaders Association.** This group meets several times a year to give advice to the state 4-H staff on policy issues, review recommendations made by state development committees, and provide guidance for program direction. Each county is represented on the State 4-H Leaders Association by a volunteer 4-H leader from that county's district. Membership on this council rotates among the counties in each district, so your current representative may or may not be from your county. This representative will report to your 4-H leaders advisory committee and 4-H staff after each meeting.

**State Fair.** State Fair offers many opportunities for volunteer 4-H leader involvement. Volunteering as a judge's clerk is an excellent way to find out what judges are looking for in 4-H exhibits. Hosts and hostesses serve for a few hours in the 4-H exhibit building, greeting the public and answering questions about 4-H. Volunteer show chairs and vice-chairs (superintendents) plan, organize, and conduct many of the

shows and activities that take place during State Fair. Talk to your county Extension staff about how to get involved in these opportunities.

**Judges' workshops.** The state 4-H staff coordinates judges' training seminars, which are also good workshops for resource leader training. These usually are open to all volunteer leaders. Local Extension offices receive announcements about upcoming judges' workshops.

## Opportunities at the regional and national level

**Western Region 4-H Leaders Forum.** Every year, usually in February or March, a Western Region 4-H Leaders Forum is held in one of the 13 Western states. The program features 3 days of informative seminars and meetings, tours, meals, and an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other 4-H leaders. Future Western Region 4-H Leaders Forums are scheduled as follows:

- February 23–27, 2005 Sacramento, California
- March 1–5, 2006 Salt Lake City, Utah
- TBA, 2007 Arizona
- March 5–10, 2008 Boise, Idaho

**National 4-H Center.** The National 4-H Center near Washington, DC is available for 4-H leaders to stay with their families while visiting the nation's capital. Reservations must be made in advance. Check with your local Extension staff for more information.

## Youth as resources

**Intermediate and senior 4-H members.** A possible source of leadership help with your club might be an older 4-H member. An older 4-H member, experienced in the same project area, could be a valuable asset in acquainting you with the total 4-H program and could provide excellent assistance in teaching your club members. Sometimes it works very well for a club with a wide range of ages and skill levels to have an experienced older member work with the younger members. This arrangement also provides an excellent opportunity for older 4-H members to develop their leadership skills. Ask your local Extension staff for ideas about involving older 4-H members in leadership roles.



4-H Leader Council  
Superintendents

## Other resources for 4-H leaders

As you can tell from this series of publications, the best resource persons for a new leader are your county's 4-H staff and other volunteer leaders. Don't hesitate to contact them for ideas, information, and assistance. In addition, the state 4-H staff is available for assistance. They can be contacted through your county Extension staff.

**Master volunteers.** Other agents in your county and trained Extension volunteers (such as Master Gardeners, Master Food Preservers, and Master Woodland Managers) are useful resources for information for your 4-H club.

**Audiovisual library.** Your county Extension office has a catalog of audiovisual aids that you can borrow from the state 4-H office. These include teaching kits, slide sets with tapes, and videotapes covering different project areas, general leadership, and citizenship. These should be ordered 3 to 4 weeks in advance from your county Extension office.

**Publications.** In addition to the publications already listed in this series, there is a multitude of resource publications at your local Extension office. Also available is the National 4-H Supply Catalog. Ask your local Extension staff about these.

## Thanks for volunteering

We hope that the information in this series has been helpful to you. We know it's a challenge to be a 4-H leader, and we also know it can be one of the most rewarding experiences you'll have. Helping young people develop into successful, caring, and productive citizens.

Welcome to the role of volunteer 4-H leader!

## Action steps

- Talk with local Extension staff about guidelines for involvement of youth as a resource in your 4-H club.
- Learn more about audiovisuals available for use with your 4-H club.
- Become involved in one or more opportunities for 4-H leaders at the county, state, or regional levels.

## Reference materials

Copies are available at your county Extension office:

- Fair handbooks
- Leader Forum information
- Audiovisual catalog
- Oregon 4-H website (<http://oregon.4H.oregonstate.edu>)

## Contacting your local Extension office

To locate an address and phone number, look in your local telephone directory. It may be listed in any number of ways in the white pages or in one of the special sections. For example, it might be listed as: 4-H; Oregon State University Extension Service; or (county name) Extension Service.

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