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## What Is 4-H?

4-H is an informal, practical, learning-by-doing educational program for youth. The purpose of 4-H is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive members of society.

Professionals and volunteers working together provide educational projects and activities related to animal science, horticulture, home economics, engineering, natural science, expressive arts, leadership, and citizenship.

4-H is America's largest out-of-school educational program for youth. More than 6 million youth now participate in 4-H, under the guidance of 600,000 Extension-trained adult volunteer leaders. It's estimated that nearly 40 million American adults are former 4-H members.

## How 4-H Is Organized

National leadership for 4-H is in the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. State headquarters are in the land-grant university of each state.

Every state has a team of county and state 4-H faculty and staff who are part of the university's Extension Service. They provide leadership and direction for the 4-H Youth Development program. Volunteer 4-H leaders provide direct leadership and educational support to youth in local communities.

## 4-H in Oregon

4-H is the youth education program of the Oregon State University Extension Service. 4-H membership is available to all Oregon boys and girls in grades K through 12. Based on their grade level in school, youth are enrolled in 4-H in one of two ways. Youth in grades K-3 enroll through the 4-H Adventures Program. This program has been specifically designed to meet the developmental characteristics of young children, and emphasizes cooperative learning and participation rather than competition. Children in the 4-H Adventures program explore many topics rather than focusing on selected project areas. Youth in grades 4-12 enroll in 4-H by selecting projects or activities from the large

number available to them. Not all 4-H participants join a club. Many participate in 4-H school enrichment or special-interest programs as described below.

4-H members are in every county in Oregon and number more than 45,000 statewide. Although 4-H is traditionally considered to be a rural youth organization, today's 4-H members live everywhere. In Oregon, about 16 percent of the members live on farms. About 31 percent live in small towns (under 10,000) or rural nonfarm areas. Another 12 percent live in towns and cities with populations of 10,000 to 50,000, while nearly 41 percent live in suburbs or cities with populations over 50,000.

## Delivery Modes

The structure of an individual 4-H club/group can vary. Structures can include single-project clubs, multi-project clubs, community clubs, school enrichment groups, and short term/special interest groups.

- **4-H clubs:** In Oregon, 4-H is conducted primarily in project clubs. A single-project club is a group of boys and girls working with an adult volunteer leader on a single project such as clothing, horses, or gardening. Multi-project clubs are organized to include more than one project, such as a 4-H livestock club, which includes members with projects in beef, sheep, and swine.

There also are 4-H community clubs in Oregon. These are clubs in which members are enrolled in a wide variety of projects. The community club leader provides overall leadership for the club, and other volunteer leaders work with the members.

Most Oregon clubs range in membership from 7 to 17 members. Clubs may meet regularly throughout the year or only part of the year, depending on the project and the interests of both leaders and members. Most club meetings are held in private homes.

- **School enrichment groups:** This type of 4-H group is formed when 4-H curriculum is utilized in the classroom during regular school hours. In most situations, the classroom teacher uses 4-H materials to provide hands-on learning experiences for the students.



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- **Short-term/special interest groups:** In this type of group, 4-H curriculum is taught over a specified amount of time (e.g., 2 months, 8 weeks, 1 week) and outside of regular school hours. After-school programs, community school programs, special interest group programs, day camps, cooperative programs with other agencies and organizations, and school-age child care settings are all examples of this delivery method.

## 4-H Projects

Oregon 4-H members may choose from some 50 different projects offered statewide, or they may develop their own projects with the assistance of an adult volunteer leader. Projects are grouped into the areas of animal science, horticulture, home economics, natural science, engineering, expressive arts, leadership, and citizenship.

4-H projects are built around three important principles: 1) subject matter knowledge and skills; 2) self-development; and 3) social interaction among people of different backgrounds, experiences, and ages.

Projects are real-life experiences that help 4-H'ers learn to make decisions. The decisions help members to feel responsible for their own actions and can lead to personal satisfaction. Members also develop good work habits and learn to work with others, sharing ideas and helping each other.

## 4-H Activities

4-H is fun! Members not only belong to clubs, but also may participate in activities such as fairs, contests, camps, tours, participation days, exchanges, and statewide activities. These activities are designed to supplement club and project experiences. They offer opportunities to learn and practice skills beyond the opportunities available in the local club. They also provide a means for members to meet 4-H'ers from other clubs, communities, and counties.

## 4-H Outreach

The Oregon 4-H Youth Development program is committed to reaching under-served audiences. Changes in statewide demographics have led to development of new programs and projects to provide opportunities for all Oregon youth.

The Oregon Outreach Project is a 4-H effort dedicated to increasing the involvement of Latino youth and families in the 4-H program. The project provides training and technical assistance to 4-H staff who work with local Latino communities to design and deliver programs that are culturally relevant and meet the interests of Latino youth. The project is supported by funding from USDA.

## Oregon 4-H Global Education Program

The world has changed drastically since the early 1990s. What happens in other countries and on other continents affects each of us in some way. Young people need opportunities to develop a global perspective to better understand their own position in the world. Oregon 4-H members have the opportunity to participate in several international exchange programs. Through the IFYE (International Four-H Youth Exchange), young adults live and work with families in other countries for 6 weeks to 6 months. For more than 25 years, Oregon also has participated in the 4-H Japanese/Korean Exchange Program. Individuals participating in this program spend 4 to 7 weeks during the summer with a host family in either Japan or Korea. Through these programs, Oregon families are able to host teens and young adults from other countries.

## Volunteer Leaders

Adult volunteer leaders are the mainstay of the 4-H program. Each year more than 7,000 adults volunteer their time and talents to help Oregon 4-H members. In addition, nearly 1,000 teens are involved in leadership projects.

Leaders learn along with 4-H members as Extension faculty members keep them informed about new information. Not only do leaders learn more about the project they are teaching, but they learn about teaching techniques and working with people. For this reason, 4-H is often referred to as an adult education program as well as a youth education program.

Although most volunteers lead clubs, there are other leadership roles in Oregon 4-H. Some volunteers might serve as community coordinators, assisting Extension staff in recruiting and organizing 4-H work in a particular geographic area. Others serve as resource leaders sharing their skills with club leaders, while still others share their talents as activity leaders for camps and special programs or committee members involved in program planning with professional staff.

The Extension professional staff provide training and support for volunteers and are responsible for program direction and the educational aspects of programming. Volunteers are the key to program delivery as they transmit information and share their skills in direct contact with youth.

## How it Began

What is now 4-H began at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when boys' and girls' agriculture clubs seemed to appear in many different places at the same time. These early efforts were organized in rural schools or

through "Farmers' Institutes" organized by agricultural colleges to bring the latest scientific information to farmers and their families. The first states to become involved were New York, Ohio, Texas, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, and Oregon.

In Oregon in 1905, L.R. Alderman, then Yamhill County school superintendent and later Oregon superintendent of public instruction, established a children's fair with programs in gardening, cooking, woodworking, raising farm animals, and other activities. The idea was expanded by Alderman and H.C. Seymour, the Polk County school superintendent. By 1910, both counties had organized boys' and girls' "industrial clubs." In 1913, the Oregon legislature appropriated funds for introducing "boys' and girls' industrial clubs" statewide under the state superintendent of public instruction.

In 1914, the U.S. Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act, formally establishing Extension work on a cooperative basis among the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state land-grant colleges, and counties in each state. Funds were included for youth programs, which in 1924 became known as 4-H.

After Smith-Lever funds became available to Oregon State University in 1914, Extension was given the responsibility for club work under an agreement with the State Department of Education. At that time, the boys' and girls' industrial clubs were redirected along the lines of 4-H in other states. Boys and girls enrolled in projects on corn growing, potato growing, vegetables, poultry, pigs, dairy herd record keeping, sewing, cooking, canning, and woodworking.

Unlike most states, 4-H in Oregon was available to city as well as rural youth from the early days. In fact, Portland is widely regarded as the first major city in the nation to have 4-H clubs under an agreement between the OSU Extension Service and the Portland School District signed in 1920.

Through the 1930s, Oregon's 4-H program was closely allied with the school. As late as 1948, many superintendents were actively involved in the organization of 4-H clubs, with teachers providing the primary adult leadership. With school consolidation and larger schools and districts, 4-H shifted to more community-oriented 4-H clubs under the leadership of parents and other adult volunteers.

A dynamic, growing organization, 4-H has expanded steadily over the years. Since 1914, more than 40 million youth from the U.S., Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam have participated in 4-H.

## How 4-H Is Financed

The 4-H program is supported by a unique combination of federal, state, and local tax funds, and private gifts and donations. In Oregon, state and federal tax

funds are used to pay Extension staff salaries and to provide educational materials. County money supports the operation of local Extension offices. Private funds support 4-H activities such as camps, field days, 4-H Summer Conference at OSU, awards, international exchanges, leader training, and special program efforts.

## Oregon 4-H Foundation

Because of the importance of private funds in supporting a well-rounded 4-H program, the Oregon 4-H Foundation was established in 1957 as a nonprofit vehicle to receive private donations in support of 4-H. The Foundation, which is now part of the OSU Foundation but with its own board of directors, provides financial support for new 4-H programs at both state and county levels, helps fund international programs, and arranges for scholarships and other awards recognizing excellence.

One of the Foundation's major efforts is the development of the Oregon 4-H Conference and Education Center in the Eola Hills near Salem. The Center, purchased by the Foundation in 1968, is being developed as funds are available. The 320-acre site is used now for 4-H camps and field days, outdoor education programs, retreats, and conferences. No tax money has been used in either buying or developing the Center.

## About Extension

The Oregon State University Extension Service is the off-campus educational arm of OSU. Specifically, Extension provides education and information based on timely research to help Oregonians solve problems and develop skills related to youth, family, community, farm, forest, and marine resources.

Extension agents and specialists are OSU faculty members. Through Extension specialists housed on the OSU campus in Corvallis, and county Extension staff members in each Oregon county, information from OSU is "extended" to the people in Oregon.

## The Symbols of 4-H

As 4-H has grown and expanded, symbols have been developed that express the spirit and rich tradition of 4-H.

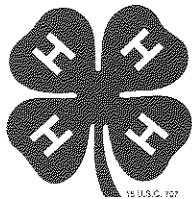
### The Four H's

The four H's stand for **Head, Heart, Hands, and Health**, representing the fourfold training and development that 4-H members receive. "Head, heart, and hands" was a familiar phrase with public speakers in the early 1990s. With these three words, educators expressed the liberalizing of conventional education ("the three R's") to include practical arts ("the three H's").

The three H's were adopted by program organizers to reflect the educational theme of 4-H. A fourth "H" was added for Health. Together the four H's symbolize the development of the head, to think, plan, and reason; the heart, to be concerned with the welfare of others, accept the responsibilities of citizenship, and develop positive attitudes; the hands, to be useful, helpful, and skillful; and health, to practice healthful living, enjoy life, and use leisure time productively.

### The 4-H Emblem

The national 4-H emblem is a green four-leaf clover with the letter "H" on each leaf. The design, attributed to O.H. Benson, an Iowa school superintendent, was adopted as the national emblem in 1911. Congress has twice passed legislation since that time protecting the 4-H name and emblem. Federal legislation regulates how the 4-H name and emblem are used. In Oregon, permission must be granted by the OSU Extension Service.



### 4-H Colors

Green and white are the 4-H colors. Green is emblematic of springtime, life, and youth, while white symbolizes high ideals.

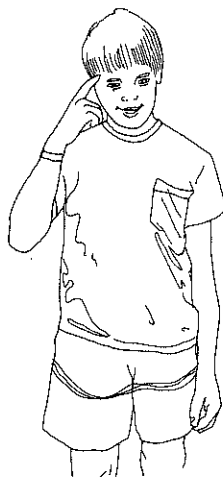
### The 4-H Motto

The 4-H motto is "To make the best better." Proposed by Carrie Harrison, a botanist with the U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, it was adopted in 1927 when the 4-H pledge was introduced.

*Revised by Lillian Larwood, Extension specialist, 4-H youth development, Oregon State University. Originally prepared by Leonard J. Calvert, Extension communication specialist emeritus; and Barbara Sawyer, Extension specialist emeritus, 4-H youth development, Oregon State University.*

## The 4-H Pledge

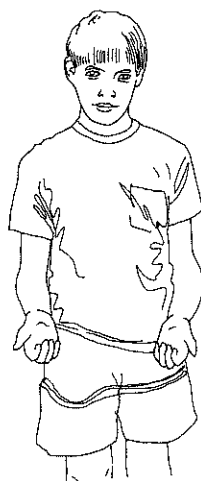
I pledge...



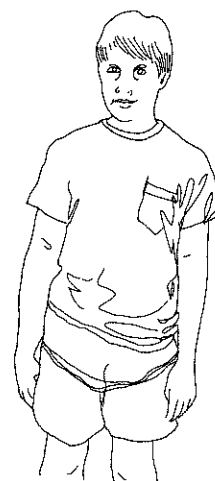
my head to clearer thinking,



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.

*In repeating the pledge, a member raises the right hand to the side of the head when speaking line one; lowers hand to heart when speaking line two; extends hands, palms upward, when speaking line three; and stands straight when speaking lines four and five.*

*The pledge was adopted in 1927 during the first National 4-H Club Camp in Washington, D.C. Otis Hall, State 4-H leader in Kansas, was responsible for the original wording, which remained unchanged until 1973 when the words "and my world" were added.*

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