

★★ LETTERS TO ★★

NEW ✻ LEADERS

Letter 5: 4-H activities

In this letter you'll find:

Club activities

- social events
- community service
- recognition activities

4-H member divisions (by grade)

County activities

- project workshops
- contests
- judging and identification contests
- presentations
- exchange programs
- County Fair
- 4-H Summer Camp

State 4-H activities

- State Fair
- special workshops
- scholarships

Regional and national activities

One 4-H goal is to help members become caring citizens of their communities. Therefore, every club is encouraged to work on a **community service** project of its choosing. Many clubs share something related to their project area with older people in retirement or nursing homes, such as taking pets for the residents to see, making special holiday favors, or just visiting. Some clubs work on environmental projects like cleaning up trash, planting flowers and shrubs, building and maintaining nature paths, or hosting and teaching special events for young children. As your club members grow and mature, they may decide on a long-term project to be developed or repeated over several years.

Many clubs have a special **recognition activity** at the end of the 4-H year, at which they acknowledge each member of the group for his or her achievements during the year. Usually families and friends are invited, giving the club leader an opportunity to explain the club activities and goals.

4-H member divisions (by grade)

To design 4-H experiences based on the developmental levels of youth, 4-H members are divided into three divisions: *junior* (grades 4 through 6), *intermediate* (grades 7 through 9), and *senior* (grades 10 through 12). These divisions are commonly used in county and state 4-H activities.

Dear Leader,

Now that you've had several club meetings and the members are excited about their project work, you'd probably like to know about the many 4-H activities available to your members.

Club activities

In addition to regular meetings, field trips, and special activity days some clubs also plan **social events** such as family potluck dinners, picnics, swimming parties, trail rides, and campouts. Your county 4-H newsletter will give you information regarding upcoming county activities—read it carefully and share it with your 4-H members.



County activities

During the 4-H year, each county has many activities in which you and your members are encouraged to participate. It's helpful to know what these are at the beginning of the year so you can plan accordingly.

Project workshops. Many counties schedule workshops in various project areas (such as large animal clinics,



small animal workshops, home economics learning days, horse clinics, dog obedience trainings, and natural resources workshops). Sometimes these are also offered in neighboring counties, or on a regional or statewide basis.

Contests. Regularly scheduled 4-H contests include food preparation contests, fashion revues, animal shows, and others. Find out from your county agent of the Oregon State University Extension Service what contests are held in your county. These contests provide educational opportunities for both 4-H members and leaders. Also, many 4-H members find that competition motivates them to "make the best better."

Judging and identification contests. These are contests in which each 4-H member evaluates classes of three or four items each and ranks them from the highest quality to the lowest quality. Your county may have judging and identification contests in the following areas: dairy cattle, dairy goat, meat animal, dog, horse, cavy, poultry, rabbit, clothing, foods, and forestry. The 4-H member is almost always asked to support his or her decisions by giving either written or oral reasons for the placings. A general description of judging and identification contest procedures as well as methods for preparing your 4-H members is given in *Judging Teaches Decision Making Leader Guide* (4-H 0255L). In Oregon, the highest scoring members in selected judging and identification contests (intermediate and senior divisions only) are eligible to participate as a county team at the State Fair.

Presentations. These are short informative talks or demonstrations given by individual 4-H members (or a team of two members) on any topic they choose. They can be given first to a member's own club, then at public gatherings, and finally at the county 4-H presentations contest. The contest has separate classes for juniors, intermediates, and seniors. County winners in the intermediate and senior divisions may be selected for State Fair. (The younger 4-H members are when they start learning to give presentations, the easier it is for them to enjoy doing it.) You might want to invite older 4-H'ers with experience in giving presentations to help teach this skill to your club.

Presentations should be 3 to 5 minutes long for younger members and 10 to 20 minutes long for older members. Helpful ideas on preparing your members are listed in *4-H Presentations Leader Guide* (4-H 0226L). Member material is *You Present* (4-H 0226).

Exchange programs. 4-H sponsors some excellent exchange programs, providing opportunity for 4-H members and their families to gain a broader understanding of the world around them. These programs are usually for intermediate and senior 4-H members. Some counties participate in exchanges with 4-H groups from other counties or states. In Oregon, some counties participate in a Japanese exchange program by hosting Japanese young people or by going to Japan as a member of an exchange group.

County Fair. One of the major activities of the 4-H year is the County Fair, where every member has the opportunity to exhibit what he or she has learned in their project area during the year. Ask your OSU Extension Service county agent for a copy of the most recent 4-H fair book so you can determine the schedule and requirements for the exhibit classes. This may help in planning the project work for your club members.

As soon as the new fair books are available, make sure you get a copy for yourself and each of your members. Also make sure that your members get the necessary entry forms for fair exhibits and know how to fill them out correctly.

Many counties use *interview judging* at their county fairs. This is a conference method evaluating 4-H member's fair exhibits. In this method of judging the 4-H member brings his or her exhibits and visits with the judge for a few minutes. The judge evaluates the member's acquired skills and knowledge, then offers positive comments and suggestions for possible improvements in future projects. Often this is one of the 4-H'ers most helpful learning experiences of the year.

Ribbon awards are usually given at fairs and in 4-H contests. In Oregon a modified merit system of judging is used for exhibits and contests. This means that exhibits are judged against a predetermined skill level standard. Each exhibit receives a blue, red, or white ribbon based on the following criteria:

Blue ribbon: excellent, within the ability of most of the contestants

Red ribbon: good quality, some room for improvement

White ribbon: acceptable, but shows need for considerable improvement

If merited, a champion and a reserve champion can be awarded in each fair class.

4-H summer camp. Summer camps are available for most Oregon 4-H members who are in 4th through 7th or 8th grade, with a camp counseling program for older youth. Ask your county Extension agent when the summer camp for your county is scheduled. You can share this and other details with your members.

Each county may have other events planned for 4-H members. Ask your county Extension agent for a list. Also, watch your county 4-H newsletter for activity announcements.



State 4-H activities

State Fair. 4-H members' exhibits that qualify at the county level may be sent to State Fair in August for judging and display. Intermediate and senior contest participants and animal-science exhibitors who qualify at the county level are eligible to participate at State Fair. Contests at State Fair include fashion revue, food preparation, mini-meals, on-the-spot, presentations, and selected judging and identification contests.

Older 4-H members may apply to do volunteer work at State Fair. Leaders and parents are also needed as department chairs, clerks, hosts and hostesses, and organizers for many of the contests and shows. Contact your county Extension agent for information.

Special workshops. In recent years special project-related workshops have been offered on a statewide basis. Some are held at the 4-H Conference and Education Center near Salem and others at locations around the state. Every other year the 4-H "Know Your State Government" weekend is scheduled in the spring, when the legislature is in session. This special citizenship training program is available for two senior 4-H members selected from each county, usually through an application process.

Scholarships. Many counties have scholarship assistance available for 4-H members applying to attend 4-H summer camps or special workshops. Contact your county office of the OSU Extension Service to find out what's available in your county.

Regional and national activities

There are several other regional and national 4-H seminars and conferences for senior members (grade 10 through 12). Information on these programs is available through your county Extension office.

As you can see, there are lots of activities for your 4-H members, in project areas as well as in citizenship and leadership development. The more you can encourage your members to participate in these activities, the more they will gain from their 4-H experience.

Good luck!



**Your county staff of the
OSU Extension Service**

Reference materials

Judging Teaches Decision Making Leader Guide, 4-H 0255L

You Present, 4-H 0226

4-H Presentations Leader Guide, 4-H 0226L

County 4-H activity publications (fair book, contest descriptions, camp flyers, etc.)

How can I use the information in this letter:

1. New activities to plan into our club program:

2. Other people who could help us and how they might help:

3. Questions to ask OSU Extension staff and other leaders:

Prepared by Mary Alice Dodd, 4-H volunteer leader, Linn County; Lyla Houghlum, former Extension specialist, 4-H youth development, Oregon State University; and Michelle Robinson, former Extension agent, 4-H youth development, Oregon State University. Development of this material was funded by R.J.R. Nabisco, Inc., through the National 4-H Council Salute to Excellence Program.

Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, O.E. Smith, director. Produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials—*without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability*—as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Cooperative Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Oregon State University, Extension Hall
Corvallis, OR 97331

★★ LETTERS TO ★★

NEW LEADERS

Letters designed to help you be a successful 4-H club leader.