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# 4-H Leadership volunteer

belonging...mastery...independence...generosity



Volume 4, Issue 1

A publication of the Iowa 4-H Foundation

## 4-H Taught Me Leadership Skills

by Courtney Tingwald,  
Boone County 4-H Member

Leadership according to Webster's New Dictionary is, "the position, function, or guidance of a leader; the ability to lead." This definition is good enough if you're studying for a vocabulary test; however, it isn't good enough for the real world.

Leadership is not about standing in front of a group and dictating to others what to do and how to do it. No, leadership is about setting an example. A leader is there to help and guide others in a positive and enthusiastic way.

I have had many leadership experiences over the years in 4-H, school, and my community. The first couple of years in 4-H I would go to the club meetings and participate in our activities, but I didn't want to have any role other than that. As the years passed I found my interests and skills growing. Now I am president of our local club, I serve on our 4-H Youth committee and County 4-H Council and am a member of the 2007-2008 Iowa 4-H Youth Council. 4-H has provided me with so many experiences, opportunities, and skills, that I honestly don't know where I would be without 4-H! I know that the leadership skills that I've developed didn't just happen by



Courtney Tingwald

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## Creatively Engaging Families Will Strengthen Your 4-H Club—but you've got to capture them on that first date and nurture that relationship!

4-H is a family affair! We need to make sure both new members and parents feel that special sense of belonging. Inviting families to that first meeting or "date" might be the easiest part—make sure you have a club plan in place because **Retention Requires Attention!**

### Make the Relationship Fun and Easy

To a new family whose members don't have a 4-H background, 4-H can be like a foreign land with foreign language. What is a project? Who can go to camp? Can we still be Hawkeye fans if 4-H is part of Iowa State University? Who do we contact if...?

New 4-H families should feel comfortable calling their volunteer leaders or 4-H program staff any time they have questions. Identify an experienced 4-H member and family in your club who can act as a mentor family to call with questions, and who the new member can sit with during the meetings. Make sure new members and families know the county and state website URL. Minimize non-essential club rules that require families to jump through hoops. Membership should be fun and easy, not a laundry list of rules and requirements by which a family has to abide.

## Second Dates

It's easy to make first dates fun. What gets the member and family to come back the second time? Whether we are looking for a family's involvement in the next 4-H meeting or the next 4-H year, pay attention to the connection made or missed during their first experience. Ask experienced 4-H families to team up with new families to make sure they are greeted, feel welcomed, and feel that sense of belonging. Develop a plan to follow up with phone calls or e-mails from the volunteer leader and experienced 4-H family after that first meeting to see if there are any questions. Make sure they know when the next meeting is, and tell them you are glad they came. Remember what it was like when you didn't get called back for a second date?

## Meeting Our Family

Are new and experienced 4-H members and families aware of all that 4-H has to offer? Do they understand that 4-H volunteers are well trained in positive youth development and that youth who participate in 4-H develop life skills that positively affect their futures? Make sure that new 4-H families are introduced to the extended 4-H and Iowa State University Extension family! Help them understand the organizational structure of 4-H and Extension. Direct them to the WOW Videos so they can hear about the powerful positive impact 4-H has on the life of young people.

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## Take Advantage of All that 4-H Has to Offer

by **Andrea L. Ramsey,**

Pocahontas County 4-H Alumna

During my nine years in 4-H, I was involved in a very active club (the Powhatan Pioneers, Pocahontas County) that encouraged me to take advantage of all that 4-H had to offer. I held a variety of offices in my local 4-H club and took advantage of out of county and out of state 4-H opportunities.

After graduating from high school, I made the leap to Yale University

in New Haven, CT and obtained a bachelors degree in sociology. Today I am a research analyst with a social and behavioral science research firm in Washington, DC.

4-H had a significant influence in the development of my leadership abilities in my career. In my job, leadership takes many different forms, from making decisions on the direction of a report chapter to the direct management and supervision of other coworkers. My time in 4-H gave me the confidence to be able to take on new challenges,

work well with others, and lead by my example of setting goals and working hard to achieve them.

Even knowledge gained from projects in Clothing, Food & Nutrition, and Style Revue have helped me establish a healthy lifestyle and present myself in an appropriate manner—both are absolutely essential in fast-paced, intense academic and professional environments.

I am so thankful for my time in 4-H and would strongly encourage everyone to participate!!

### (Leadership Skills continued from front)

chance. That first Pioneer Grant application that I volunteered to write, the first time I ran for a club office—those experiences helped to prepare me for my future.

Now I'm not afraid to step up and run for an office and conduct a meeting according to parliamentary procedure. I know how to work on a committee with others for that common goal. And those speeches that my high school classmates are so nervous about are a breeze after nine years in 4-H!

Yes, sometimes it can be tough and frustrating to be a leader, but the benefits of leading outweigh the burdens. The experiences I've had and the people who I've worked with have all made it worthwhile ten times over.

### ... and justice for all

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jack M. Payne, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.

### (Engaging Families continued from front)

#### WOW Videos

<mms://wms.extension.iastate.edu/video/wow/alyssa.wmv>

<mms://wms.extension.iastate.edu/video/wow/brad.wmv>

<mms://wms.extension.iastate.edu/video/wow/elizabeth.wmv>

<mms://wms.extension.iastate.edu/video/wow/jennifer.wmv>

<mms://wms.extension.iastate.edu/video/wow/trailer.wmv>

#### Going Steady

Now is a good time to review your relationship with both new and experienced 4-H members and their families. Do you know what they need to continue in a successful relationship—do they know what help you need to continue in your role? Take time to visit with members and their families, plan an activity to assess the club's strengths and weaknesses, ask your county 4-H staff and Youth Field Specialist to help with a club review.

#### Communication: The Key to All Relationships

Clear, active communication between volunteers, 4-H members, 4-H families, and county staff sets the stage for success in your club. Both communication training modules with tools you need to help you manage communication in your club can be found on the 4-H website at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/Volunteers/voltraining.htm>. If you don't have access to the Internet, ask your county extension office for a copy of the DVD that contains the training and the handouts that go with it.

In addition, remember to be a cheerleader for your 4-H members, celebrate your successes as a club, and let everyone know that 4-H volunteers are caring adults.

Volunteers are the key to a successful relationship—thank you for all you do.

Adapted with permission from “Retention: Keeping the Relationship Reciprocal,” by Craig Harrison at <http://www.expressionsofexcellence.com/ARTICLES/retention.html>.