
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF 4-H!

Opportunities for 4-H Volunteers



Key Ideas

Youth leadership programs

- 4-H leadership project area

Opportunities at the county level

- New 4-H volunteer orientation
- Ongoing 4-H volunteer training/meetings
- County 4-H activities
- County 4-H Youth Committee

Opportunities at the state level

- New volunteer training
- State fair
- Judges' workshops

Opportunities at the national level

- National 4-H Center

Other resources for 4-H volunteers

- Iowa State University 4-H website
- Master Volunteers
- Publications and online resources

Dear Volunteer,

As you feel comfortable with one aspect of the program, you'll want to challenge yourself to take on new leadership experiences. You have probably discovered that along with your members you, too, are gaining new knowledge and skills. There are many opportunities available for 4-H volunteers to learn more about the total 4-H program, make new friends, and develop additional skills. Your county 4-H newsletter will announce and describe these activities as they occur as well as the state 4-H website. <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/Volunteers/>

Youth leadership programs

Older youth may be a good source of leadership for your club. They may enroll in the 4-H leadership project. With your guidance, they can provide leadership by planning events/activities for club members. They set their goals, carry out and evaluate their activity, and keep project records on their leadership. For example, through a 4-H leadership project, a 4-H'er might help younger members with presentations, record keeping or recreation, or they could plan and conduct a club activity or event including a community service learning project. Each project Hot Sheet contains communication, citizenship, and leadership tips.

Older 4-H'ers might also serve as a 4-H project teen leader. They would assist other 4-H'ers with a specific project area using their knowledge and expertise from their previous experience in the project. This could also be their 4-H leadership project if they want it to be.

Youth can also serve as club officers and as committee chairs and members, they can help other 4-H'ers, serve on county or state 4-H council, help with events and activities, etc.

Youth serving in leadership roles need to be partners with adults in planning, implementing and evaluating their experiences. Youth don't work for you, they work with you in youth-adult partnership

Opportunities at the county level

Orientation and volunteer training are part of the preparation for all new volunteers. Your county Extension staff will provide you with orientation and training. In addition, foundational positive youth development training and Clover Kids training for new volunteers may occur in your county or a county near you. Staff in your county Extension office will let you know when and where the next training will be held.

Ongoing 4-H volunteer meetings. One of the best ways to become familiar with the 4-H program and to find out what other volunteers are doing with their clubs is to attend 4-H volunteer training/meetings in your county. Some counties have project volunteer meetings (i.e. livestock, gardening, Shooting Sports, horse, dogs and cats, visual art volunteers, etc.). Not only will you find these meetings helpful and informative, but other volunteers will appreciate your ideas and assistance. Annually, 4-H volunteers will attend a face to face training offered in your county and presented by your region's Youth Program Specialist (YPS). These trainings are the same in each county and are designed to support your youth development knowledge and skills and ensure that all 4-H members statewide have the same access to well trained, quality volunteers. These trainings are also available online because we know that sometimes life gets in the way of schedules! Contact your county Extension office for more information about training in your county – or watch your county online calendar.

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

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

County 4-H Youth Committee. County Youth Committees are vital partners in fulfilling the mission of 4-H at the county level. Members are youth and adults from the county who are committed to taking an active role in the assessment, planning, conducting and evaluating of county 4-H programs.

This group may be called the "County Extension Youth Committee," or the "Extension 4-H Youth Committee". Learn more about County Youth Committees at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/working-youth-committees>

To find out more about all aspects of the total 4-H program, attend your county 4-H volunteer meetings. Talk with your county Extension staff about opportunities at the county level.

Opportunities at the state level

Iowa 4-H Volunteers Workshops. There are several statewide 4-H activities in which volunteers become involved. There are many workshops that focus on general leadership skill development and specific 4-H project or program areas such as fishing, art, gardening, livestock, Shooting Sports, clothing, etc. Also, sometimes counties in the same geographic area will get together and offer local workshops or volunteer forums.

State Fair. State Fair offers opportunities for 4-H volunteer involvement. Volunteering during judging days 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 assistant superintendents help plan, organize, and conduct many of the shows and activities that are conducted during state fair. Talk to your county Extension staff about how to get involved in these opportunities or check them out at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/statefair/>.

Judges' workshops. Judges' training seminars, which also are good workshops for project volunteer training are held around the state. These are usually open to all 4-H volunteers. County Extension offices receive announcements about upcoming judges' workshops.

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/iowa-4-h-judges>

Opportunities at the national level

National 4-H Center. The National 4-H Center near Washington, D.C. is available for 4-H volunteers to stay with their families while visiting the nation's capitol. Reservations must be made in advance.

Check for more information at

<http://www.4hcenter.org/>

Other resources for 4-H volunteers

As you can tell from these letters, the best resource persons for a new volunteer are your county's 4-H staff and other volunteers. Don't hesitate to contact them for ideas, information, and assistance. Also, regional Youth Program Specialists and campus staff of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach 4-H are available for assistance. They can be contacted through your county Extension staff.

Iowa State University 4-H Youth Development Website for Volunteers

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/Volunteers/>

Check this resource for volunteer resources such as links to risk management training, current training, club management, project areas, State Fair information, and other links to related information, activities, and opportunities.

Master Volunteers. Your county may have Master Gardeners, Conservationists, Woodland Managers, or Food Preservers who may be useful resources for you and for your 4-H club.

We hope that the information in these letters has been helpful to you. We know it is a challenge to be a 4-H volunteer, and we also know it can be one of the most rewarding experiences you will have--helping young people develop into:

- **Productive Citizens**
- **Outstanding Communicators**
- **Effective Leaders**
- **Successful Learners**

Thank you for volunteering with Iowa 4-H!

Action Steps

- ◆ Familiarize yourself with training opportunities available in your county and in state and national levels. Share with other leaders.
- ◆ Attend programs that will help your club grow.

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 ISU Extension staff and other volunteers:

This is an adaptation of an Oregon State University publication that was prepared by Mary Alice Dodd, 4-H volunteer leader, Linn County; Lyla Houglum, Extension specialist, 4-H and youth development, Oregon State University; and Michelle Robinson, Extension agent, 4-H youth, Oregon State University Extension Service. Development of this material was funded by R.J.R. Nabisco, Inc., through the National 4-H Council Salute to Excellence Program, September 1987.

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