

Involve Parents – “4-H is a family affair.”

Everyone benefits when parents are involved in the 4-H club program:

- **4-H members** need their own parents’ support and encouragement to attend meetings, complete projects and fulfill responsibilities to the club.
- **Parents** have an opportunity to spend time with their children and enjoy activities together. In many ways 4-H is a “partner in parenting.”
- **4-H leaders** have a lot to juggle. Being able to delegate some of those responsibilities, even the smallest ones, can be a big help.
- **The community** benefits when families support community-minded organizations like 4-H. Involved families are more knowledgeable about community issues and therefore more likely to support community efforts as well.

Keep these benefits in mind when you invite parents to attend events or to lend a hand – it is in their own best interest to say “yes!” But, how, when and who do you ask? Here are some suggestions:

1. **Meet with parents at the beginning of each year.** While members should make the final decisions about projects and activities, leaders need to inform parents and enlist their support and leadership early in the year.
2. **Maintain good communications.** In order for parents to feel involved in the club, they must be kept informed about the “when, where and whys” of both the club’s activities and the 4-H club program in general.
3. **Create opportunities to get to know parents better.** For example, hold “parent nights” or “family days” during which members can “show-off” their accomplishments and you can socialize with parents. Learn about their personal interests, hobbies and family activities. Later requests for help can then be based on the things you know they enjoy and can do well.
4. **When you need help:**
 - a. Ask an individual, basing your request on that person’s interests, skills and abilities. Generic calls for help don’t work!
 - b. Be honest and specific about the time commitment and time frame.
 - c. Ask well in advance of when the job needs to be done.
5. **Express your appreciation appropriately.** Regardless of how much or how little a parent has done, they deserve a “thank you,” whether it is a phone call, a hand-written note or public recognition.

Communication – an Important Two-way Street

You will be receiving regular communications and special mailings from the 4-H office. Often they will contain registration instructions for upcoming events. Occasionally staff will request information for reporting purposes. The information you provide is important and submitting it

on time eliminates the need for duplicate mailings or phone calls that needlessly waste time and money.