Creating & Maintaining Facebook Groups

Facebook Group Guidelines

When a club volunteer expresses interest in beginning a Facebook group for their club, ask them these questions:

1. Why do you think your club should have a Facebook group?
   a. Is there a communication problem?
   b. Have youth leaders or parents requested this?
2. What is the goal with this group?
   a. Improve communication by adding a new option for sharing information?
   b. Having a place to easily share images?
3. Who is the audience?
   a. If the goal is recruiting new members a closed group will not reach this goal.
4. Is this form of communication the best way to reach my audience?
   a. Are your club members and/or parents on Facebook?
5. Who will maintain this Facebook group?
   a. Is there one person that is taking this on?
6. How often will they/I post to it?
   a. Does this volunteer have time to consistently engage in this closed group?
7. How will they/I monitor private messages and comments?
   a. If club members and/or parents post questions on this group, they will expect a response.
      i. Discuss if the county 4-H staff can comment with answers when able or if the group admin can tag the county 4-H staff when an answer is needed.

Guidelines for Setting Up a Facebook Group:

1. Closed groups are recommended for 4-H clubs instead of public pages for the reasons below:
   a. **Safety:** Club leaders and members will be safer in what they can post. For example, they could post a club photo from an activity or a guest speaker in their closed group. If they have a public page, they can only post that photo if they have release forms signed by all people in the photo.
   b. **Engagement:** Closed groups nearly always have more engagement (likes and comments) than public pages. One reason is that those that may comment don't have to overthink about people outside of their club seeing what they'll write. Groups create an atmosphere like a group text thread where you know who is seeing what you're saying.
   c. **Brand Adherence:** All public pages run by a non-staff member would need to be closely monitored to ensure that the 4-H name and emblem is being used correctly and that the page is respecting the values of Iowa 4-H and adhering to all brand

guidance for Iowa 4-H and ISU Extension and Outreach. This adds responsibility to the county youth professional and will be hard for volunteers that don't have access to MyExtension resources like templates.

2. It's recommended that at least one 4-H youth staff be an administrator of the closed group. If not an administrator, it is required that one county 4-H youth staff be a member of the group

3. County youth staff should help guide the naming of the closed group. A suggested format is "Iowa 4-H [club name] | [county name]"
    a. Examples:
        1. Iowa 4-H Cass Red Cardinals | Hamilton County
        2. Iowa 4-H Hamilton County Hustlers

Group Guidelines for Administrators:
1. Ensure admins agree on usage of the Facebook group. A document could be created, like a waiver, that volunteers review and sign at annual training to ensure they understand the guidelines of their closed group and to reinforce that they may have started the page but by using the 4-H name and emblem, and by being an Iowa 4-H volunteer, that means the page is fully under the umbrella of Iowa 4-H and their county youth staff.

2. The information posted in a closed group should also be shared in another form, preferably an email or text. This ensures that those who don't use Facebook will not miss out on reminders or updates.

3. Monitor frequently — check in on your group regularly.
    a. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and bullying. 4-H staff have reporting responsibilities if harassment and bullying occur. Delete or hide posts that are profane, obscene, harassing, threatening, or contain personal information.
        i. Volunteers should communicate with their county staff supervisor prior to deleting or hiding a comment.
    b. If it gets too negative/critical, message a person privately.
        i. Also remember that as an administrator, you have the power to remove a person from your group.
        ii. Prior to removing someone from a closed group, volunteers and county staff should inform their supervisor(s) and potentially Iowa 4-H Communications staff.

4. Encourage conversation — if appropriate, chime in and ask questions, create polls, respond to comments.
    a. Post with purpose!
        i. If you post content that has low value to your group, the page followers are less likely to see your content over time as it will fall lower in their newsfeed.

5. When relevant, share content from the main Iowa 4-H Facebook page or your county ISU Extension and Outreach affiliated pages with your group.