



Parent Involvement in 4-H

4-H is a family affair! Or it should be, and this means that parents or guardians of your 4-H members should be an important part of your program. Parent involvement is one of the keys to a successful 4-H club. It provides an ongoing base for club support and expands the potential for interesting and exciting 4-H club programs. Active parents mean active members:

$$\begin{array}{l} \textit{Favorable} \\ \textit{Attitudes} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \textit{Parent} \\ \textit{Interests} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \textit{Active Parent} \\ \textit{Cooperation} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \textit{Successful} \\ \textit{4-H Clubs} \end{array}$$

Why Should Parents Participate in 4-H?

Parent/guardian participation in 4-H results in the following benefits:

- Family involvement in 4-H offers opportunities where both child and parent participate with common interest, strengthening family ties.
- Active parent participation can strengthen and broaden the 4-H program in any local club or in any county.
- When parental support is positive, the club is likely to become stronger, larger, and more active.
- In clubs where parental support is evident, individual members receive more personal attention and guidance from leaders and parents.
- Club activities and events will develop and expand with the additional support of parents. 4-H can have a positive influence on the lives of thousands of boys and girls. This happens when parents care enough to share their time, efforts, and talents.

Ideas to Help Inform and Interest Parents and Gain Their Cooperation

- Involve members and parents in setting goals and planning your club's program each year.
- Become familiar with the interests and special talents of your members' parents. Ask for advice in areas where they can contribute, then make *good* use of good ideas. Be specific with requests. Use the *Parent Interest Inventory* on the last page of this information sheet.
- When parents volunteer to help, make sure they are involved in something worthwhile. Make a mental note of their offer and return their call within a few days with some *specific* task in which they can help.
- Involve parents in sharing leadership as project leaders. Emphasize that they can teach a skill or project that may require only a few 4-H meetings for the entire year. If the parent enjoys this role, encourage them to become a registered/appointed 4-H volunteer.



- Keep parents informed. Help them understand the 4-H objectives. Send notes and letters directly to parents about the club program. Allow time for discussion before or after meetings with parents. E-mails are a great tool for keeping families informed. Be sure your club has a phone chain for emergency cancellations and important messages.
- Invite parents to club meetings. For new members and parents, you might want to have a special meeting explaining the 4-H program and your club's activities. Let parents know what is expected of their child.
- Recognize both members and their parents. Thank parents for their support both personally and in public. Compliment parents for their contributions to the club program.
- Maintain parent interest. Arrange a special social event with parents. Ask county 4-H staff to attend a parent night program. Introduce parents to the 4-H staff so they can become better acquainted.
- Encourage members to make their 4-H work a topic of family conversation.
- Solicit parent involvement at the 4-H fair and other activities and events where 4-H club work is showcased.
- Give parents a copy of *Parents: Helping your 4-H'er Succeed*.

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References:

*Smith, Carolyn A., **New York State 4-H Club Management, a Resource Guide**, Cornell Cooperative Extension, November 1982.*

Parents-Partners on the 4-H Team (*tape-slide program*), Cooperative Extension Service, The Ohio State University.



4-H Parent Interest Survey

Dear 4-H Parents or Guardians:

Welcome to the 4-H Family! 4-H helps youth to develop knowledge, attitude, and skills they need to become competent, caring, and contributing citizens of the world. Parents and 4-H leaders working together can do so much more for the girls and boys than either can do alone.

We hope you share in 4-H by encouraging your child to participate and, as the 4-H motto says, "To Make the Best Better!"

Please check the things you are willing to do to provide learning opportunities for the 4-H members. Return to the club leader.

Home

- _____ Enable my child to attend all meetings and encourage him/her to be an active, contributing member of the club.
- _____ Encourage my child to start and complete projects on time. I will take an active interest and encourage pride in his/her own achievements.
- _____ Encourage my child to participate in county workshops, public presentations, fair, camp, and other activities which enhance learning opportunities.
- _____ Encourage my child to keep an up-to-date calendar of 4-H meetings and events.
- _____ Encourage my child to maintain current records of 4-H projects and activities.
- _____ Enable my child to meet financial responsibilities in monthly dues, project expenses, etc.

Club

- _____ Provide an occasional meeting place for the club.
- _____ Help provide light refreshments for a 4-H meeting.
- _____ Share a special interest or hobby with the group. List _____
- _____ Help carpool transportation for meetings or field trips.
- _____ Be a leader's helper for one project. List _____
- _____ Help youth prepare for public presentations or fair.
- _____ Serve on committee to help plan and conduct events.
- _____ Make telephone calls.

County

- _____ Help carpool transportation to county meetings or events.
- _____ Help at county events.
- _____ Serve on county committee as an interested parent.
- _____ Assist during the 4-H fair (set up, take down, staffing booths, etc.)

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Telephone (day) _____ (evening) _____

E-mail _____



Did You Know...



The mission of the National 4-H Headquarters is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities by creating opportunities for youth.

www.national4-hheadquarters.gov

For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.