



## **Recognizing Your 4-H Members' Achievements**

*"Good Job!"*

*"Here is your pin for completing a year of 4-H club work."*

*"You have received a blue ribbon for the excellent job you did on your project."*

*"Congratulations! You have received an outstanding award on your project."*

*"Your team members worked well together."*

No matter how we say it, we continually recognize young people for their achievements in 4-H. Recognition comes in many forms and can be linked to participation, achievement, cooperation, or competition. It is important to understand why children need recognition and how we can recognize them for their accomplishments.

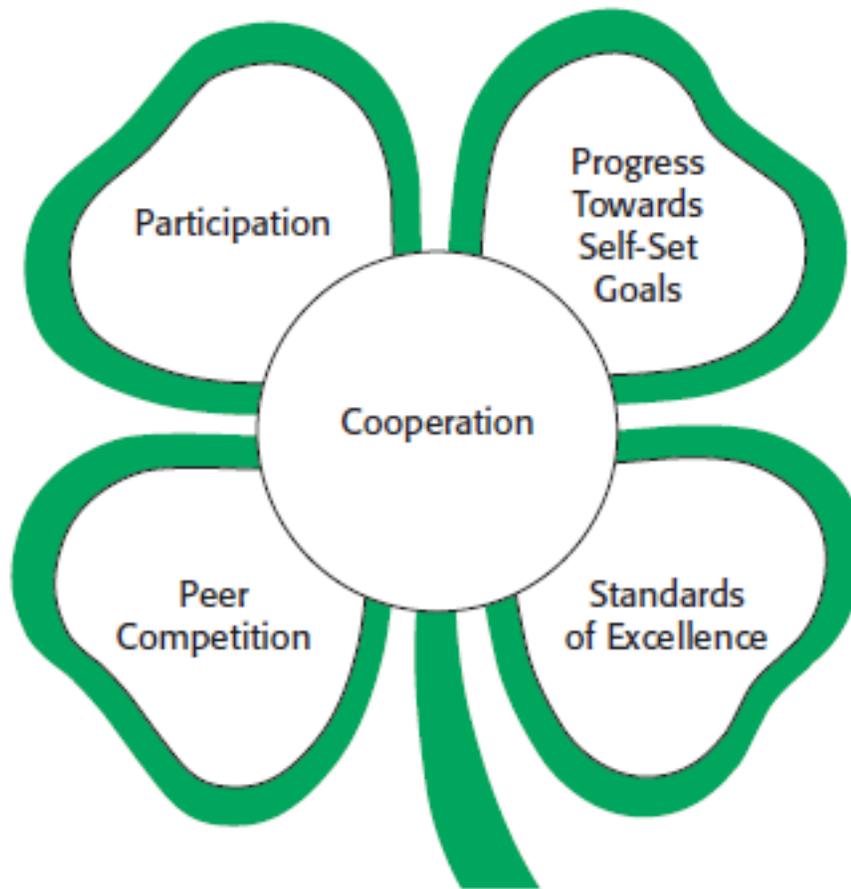
### **Beliefs About Recognition**

- Recognition is a basic human need.
- Recognition must be designed to build self-esteem.
- A balance between intrinsic (intangible) and extrinsic (tangible) recognition is essential.
- Adult support is essential.
- All 4-H'ers need to experience recognition for their efforts.
- Recognition is more meaningful when it occurs soon after it is earned.
- Appropriate recognition for individual 4-H'ers varies with their stage of development, past experiences, family life-style, community, and cultural heritage.
- Opportunities for self-assessment and reflection within the recognition process allow youth to learn and grow. 4-H'ers should be permitted to exercise individual choices in learning and participation and be recognized accordingly.



## National 4-H Recognition Model

The following model was developed, based on a national 4-H study, to recognize individuals and groups, youth, adults, families, and partnerships. The purpose of recognition is to encourage and support the efforts of young people in learning to increase their knowledge and develop their life skills.



*Recognition to encourage and support learning is provided equally in all five areas. Cooperation partly overlaps Participation Progress Toward Self-Set Goals, Standards of Excellence, and Peer Competition. Cooperation is part of all four. The intent of the graphic is to show that recognition is given to individuals and people working together in teams or groups.*

## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Participation in Educational Experiences

It is important to acknowledge the participation of 4-H members in an educational activity. For younger members (grades K-3), participation is the major form of recognition. It should be easy and simple for members to earn this type of recognition. It can take the form of a name in the paper, a t-shirt, participation ribbons, etc. Criteria for earning this recognition should be simple. All youth who meet the criteria are recognized. Recognition can be earned several times. The awards should be part of the learning experience.



## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Progress Towards Self-Set Goals

An important part of 4-H is to help members learn to set goals and plan ways to achieve those goals. Setting goals is appropriate for all ages and all activities. A 4-H member may have a goal of learning to put in a zipper, or a 4-H club may have a goal of collecting food for a local homeless shelter. Personal goals set by a member allow for the unique growth of that member. Recognizing accomplishment of steps in the process can provide motivation to continue. Setting and achieving small goals will lead to accomplishing a long-term goal, such as completing the year's project.

Adults, both leaders and parents/guardians, should be part of this goal setting process to help the member set realistic and reachable goals, as well as to evaluate progress toward achieving them. Refer to *Helping Youth Set Goals*. Recognition for self-set goals can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. For example, youth can be encouraged to acknowledge and be proud of their goals. In addition, they may receive award recognition such as a blue ribbon for their project at the fair.

## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Achievement of Standards of Excellence

Measuring a member's accomplishments against a set of standards is one of the most common ways that 4-H members traditionally have been recognized. Showing projects at fairs are excellent opportunities for youth to have their work compared to standards. The Danish system of judging is used at 4-H fairs and allows members to receive colored ribbons (blue, red, yellow, white) based on a score determined according to established standards. However, when members are then ranked against one another and an overall winner is selected, recognition moves to the level of peer competition.

When recognizing members' achievement of standards, it is important that the standards be well defined and available to members beforehand. All participants should know and understand the standards they need to achieve. After members are evaluated, usually on a score sheet, feedback from the judge is needed to help them learn how well they rated on a set of standards and to receive suggestions for improvement.

## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Results from Peer Competition

Peer competition is a strong motivator for some but not all young people. Participation in peer competition should be optional and is not appropriate for younger children. This type of recognition is more extrinsic, with the award being a trophy, rosette, or plaque. If properly designed and implemented, this type of recognition showcases the best things produced by 4-H'ers at that specific time and place. The desire to win may overpower the desire to learn from the experience. It is important to help youth remain focused on the experience rather than the competition.

Peer competition results identify the best team or individual according to established specific selection criteria and procedures. Rules and procedures must be clearly stated, understood, and enforced, in order for peer competition to provide a positive learning experience for all participants. Negative stress, conflict, hard feelings, and disagreement can be reduced by making sure everyone understands exactly what is expected. It is important to remember that this form of recognition is designed to promote the development of youth rather than the success of their program.

## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Their Cooperative Efforts and Skills

Learning and working together promotes high achievement. Successful cooperation relies on the skills represented by all members in the group, as well as the process by which the group approaches and achieves the learning task or goal. Cooperation involves the contribution of all of the youth in the group. Everyone is rewarded intrinsically, and extrinsic reward is equally important. An example of recognition for cooperation would be all members of an event planning team having their names listed with thanks in the event program or each receiving a thank you certificate. Cooperative recognition could include a special county-wide pizza party for all club members that achieved *4-H Honor Club* status.



## Summary

A balanced program has recognition opportunities in all five of the categories.

Designing a recognition system involves:

- Looking at the young people: their needs, interests, attitudes, and aspirations.
- Understanding differences between people based on background and experiences.
- Using recognition that encourages and supports learning and satisfies intrinsic and extrinsic needs. It has to balance recognition for participation, progress toward self-set goals, achievement of standards of excellence, competition, and cooperation.

This Recognition Model is appropriate and applicable at all levels of 4-H. Recognition committees and councils at the local, county, state, and national levels utilize this approach in all recognition programs. Using a comprehensive recognition program can lead to more youth being recognized and can provide a way to say to every youth:

*"You are a valued and important member of the 4-H program."*

*Revised by Phillipa Myers and Ginny Powell.*

*Written by Ginny Powell.*

## References

4-H 101 – Lesson 15: Recognizing 4-H'ers Accomplishments

National Model for Recognition in 4-H Programs. National 4-H Council

***For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit [www.nj4h.rutgers.edu](http://www.nj4h.rutgers.edu).***

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