

---

# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF **4-H** AN INTRODUCTION



# Framing 4-H for Families

---

## Welcome to 4-H

Congratulations! You have become a 4-H family. Your family is joining one of the largest educational youth organizations in the United States. Your family? Yes, your family! While the educational experience is designed for youth in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, adult involvement is a key to their success. Your support keeps your child interested, enthusiastic, and active in the 4-H program.

You might be wondering how you will fit one more thing into your busy schedule. We know how difficult it is to balance work, family, and home life. Often, adults spend time driving their children from one activity to another and miss out on time spent together. 4-H works to solve this problem by offering hundreds of projects and activities where young people and their families can learn and grow together. Imagine the fun in developing interests and hobbies as a family.

Want to know more about the 4-H program? This guide has been prepared to give you a brief overview of 4-H and to help you understand the roles and expectations for families, members, and leaders.

Let us just say welcome to 4-H—we're glad you're here.

## What is 4-H?

4-H is an informal, educational youth development program conducted by the Oregon State University Extension Service, as authorized by federal and state statutes. Local Extension staff have the authority to administer the program in accordance with University and Extension policy. Extension staff members work with advisory groups to provide a program that meets the county needs.

Members belong to a club/group led by volunteer leaders and take part in club activities such as service learning, educational tours, and fun events. In addition to club activities, there is a wide variety of enrichment activities offered at the county, state, national, and international levels.

4-H leaders are trained volunteers who have enrolled with the Extension Service. They present information provided by Extension and Oregon State University. Publications your child receives for use with 4-H projects are developed by Extension faculty or other resource people.

4-H helps young people discover and develop life skills and set personal goals. Involvement in project areas gives members the help needed to improve specific skills and explore new ones. Activities within clubs also introduce members to the importance of helping others through community service.

## Who Can Be a 4-H Member?

4-H Adventures is the program for youth in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This program provides opportunities for active learning in a noncompetitive environment.

4-H community/project clubs are for youth in grades 4 through 12. Members are enrolled in 4-H by grade divisions, with grades 4 through 6 identified as juniors, grades 7 through 9 as intermediates, and grades 10 through 12 as seniors.

## 4-H Benefits Families

Children need attention, and the 4-H program has a proven record of providing education, evaluation, recognition, and opportunity to succeed. A member enrolled in her or his first 4-H project has the ability to learn many new things about this interest, share this knowledge with others at club meetings and county contests, and display to others her or his success in areas such as art, foods, natural science, or an animal exhibit.

4-H also benefits families through:

- County activities and events—a way to show 4-H successes and a positive learning tool for members and families
- Interaction with other club members, families of other club members, and the public, which has a positive effect on 4-H members
- Club events and contests, which bring members together and provide a cooperative learning environment

4-H events are family events. The member might have a main role to play, but the entire family is encouraged to be part of the experience. Families can take on supportive roles to encourage the member. Many clubs and county programs hold annual family picnics, family nights, and recognition programs.

Families also benefit from 4-H. Being involved with other adults creates an extended social network. Sharing ideas and helping plan club events is a positive role many adults are willing to perform. The 4-H club leader who involves other adults in club activities has more time for helping members and teaching information about their projects.

## 4-H Projects

Oregon 4-H members may choose from more than 80 different projects offered statewide, or they may develop their own projects with the assistance of an adult volunteer leader and county Extension staff members. Projects are grouped into the areas of animal science, horticulture, home economics, natural resources, engineering, and expressive arts.

- Animal science projects range from small to large, and include chickens, pigeons, rabbits, cavies, dairy and beef cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, and dogs.



- Horticulture members work with flowers or vegetables, designing and caring for gardens or containers.
- Expressive arts projects include art painting, photography, ceramics, fiber arts, leathercraft, and decorative painting.
- Home economics members learn skills associated with food preparation and preservation, nutrition, child care, home decorating, and clothing construction.
- Forestry, geology, entomology, marine science, environmental stewardship, and shooting sports make up the natural science projects.
- Engineering projects include woodworking and tractor safety instruction.

Opportunities to develop citizenship and leadership skills are present at all levels of the 4-H Youth Development Program. Members have a chance to test these skills at various events throughout the year and can focus on these areas as projects at the intermediate and senior levels. Camp counseling, junior leader clubs, junior toastmasters, and school activities all work together to develop skills used in the 4-H program.

Projects are real-life experiences that help 4-H'ers learn to make decisions. These decisions help members feel responsible for their own actions and can lead to personal satisfaction. Members also develop good work habits and learn to work with others, sharing ideas and helping each other. Many projects are completed in or near the home, so the family can work and be together.

### **The 4-H Mission**

The mission of the Oregon 4-H Youth Development Program is to develop youth and adult potential to improve communities through:

- learning to live
- learning to make a living
- strengthening families and communities
- becoming lifelong learners
- developing leadership
- using research-based knowledge and the land-grant university system

## **4-H Roles and Expectations**

Volunteer 4-H leaders, club members, and families working together as a team will lead to a successful 4-H experience.

### **4-H Families**

If you are wondering how you can help, here are some suggestions:

- Assist your child in selecting 4-H projects.
- Take an interest in your child's 4-H projects and activities.
- Encourage your child when he or she succeeds, but even more so when things are not going well.
- Be a positive role model.
- Provide transportation to local meetings and county activities in which your child is interested.
- Attend 4-H meetings and other special activities.
- Help your child be prepared.
- Offer your services to assist the leader.

All adults have knowledge and skills needed in 4-H. Look, listen, and offer suggestions for club and project ideas.

### **4-H Leaders**

Club leaders are adults who care enough about young people to volunteer their time to work with them. They:

- enroll members in the program
- supervise members' project work and provide an opportunity for evaluation of the members' progress

- obtain and distribute project materials
- work with members, families, junior leaders, and other 4-H leaders to plan a fun, educational program for the year
- assist members in arranging and conducting meetings
- keep abreast of changes, policies, new information, etc. by attending leader trainings and leader meetings
- teach or arrange for the teaching of the specific skills identified by members and/or in the project manuals
- inform members of county, state, national, and international activities, and encourage them to participate

### **4-H Members**

4-H members also have roles and responsibilities. Members work as individuals and as a team. They:

- select projects with guidance from a 4-H leader and parents or guardians
- participate in enrolled projects
- keep a record of project work
- attend club meetings and participate in club activities
- abide by the 4-H Code of Conduct

Members also may take on additional roles in the 4-H program. As their involvement in the club or county program grows, so does their level of responsibility to the program.

## **Extension and 4-H**

4-H is designed to be a positive experience for members, clubs, and families. In order to have this happen for your child, please rely on the network of available help.

Your 4-H club leader is prepared to help members with project work and notify them of activities related to their project. Families of other members in the club are great resources for new 4-H families. 4-H staff, who work at the local Extension office, can answer many questions and provide good suggestions for helping with projects. The staff member in charge of

---

the 4-H program is available to provide support, education, and help with problem solving.

The local Extension office provides services that allow 4-H activities to occur. Local 4-H staff members recruit and train volunteer leaders, distribute 4-H project materials, facilitate events, teach educational programs and trainings, and work with the county 4-H leaders association.

Project materials, videos, teaching aids, and contest questions are available from the local Extension office. Each office, working with Oregon State University, can provide materials for a project the state supports. Materials for local projects and activities are created locally by agents and/or by volunteer leaders.

Local Extension offices and OSU departments have websites that offer additional information. The OSU Extension home page (<http://extension.oregonstate.edu>) can help you locate these sites. Visit the Oregon 4-H website (<http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/>) to become better informed and enjoy what 4-H and the OSU Extension Service have to offer.

## 4-H Program Fees

There are no state or local dues or initiation fees to become a 4-H member. Members might be asked to pay for project materials, insurance, and registration fees for special activities or events.

The projects selected usually will determine the total cost of 4-H. Members may enroll in one or several projects. Families may have on hand many of the support materials needed for these projects or they may need to purchase items. There will be a significant difference between starting a large animal project and starting a clothing project, unless the animals and equipment already are available for the member's use.

The investment also may increase as members grow with the 4-H program and become active in regional, state, national, or international events.

Members may become involved in club or local fund-raising events to help meet club or project expenses. When clubs set their goals for the years, fund-raising may be a part of their plan. Clubs also are encouraged to assist with fund-raising conducted by the county 4-H Leaders Association.

Scholarships for many 4-H camps, trainings, and statewide programs are available. Adults need to ask about how to apply and what followup is needed to receive the 4-H financial support.

Again, congratulations...and welcome to the world of 4-H!

### 4-H Values

- **Community volunteers** as a vital key to success
- **Respect for the individual** and fostering a caring attitude toward others
- **Continuous development of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health** to achieve full potential
- An appreciation of **human diversity** to encourage respect for cultural diversity
- **Teamwork** to achieve objectives
- **Lifelong and hands-on learning**
- Developing **leadership** in youth
- **Research and knowledge**, using the best research-based methods for working with youth
- **Partnerships** as essential to successful youth and adult development, educational programs, and resource development

*This is part seven of a seven-part series. This series is a cooperative project between Oregon State University, Washington State University, and the University of Idaho.*

JoAnn Mast, Extension faculty and staff chair, Coos County; Anne Manlove, Extension faculty, Jackson County; and Lillian Larwood, Extension specialist and assistant program leader, 4-H youth development, Oregon State University.

© 2005 Oregon State University. This publication may be photocopied or reprinted in its entirety for noncommercial purposes.

Produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials—without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability, and disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Published July 2000. Revised January 2005.