

Families: Partners on the 4-H Team



Why Families Are Needed

When parents, grandparents, and other family members participate in 4-H, the 4-H members benefit from their support and encouragement. When families know about 4-H and the activities and events available to the members, they can help their children participate. Informed family members can help youth attend club meetings, workshops, keep records, participate in community service activities, and prepare for leadership roles in the club program.

Families are a valuable resource to 4-H. When family members have the opportunity to share their interests and talents with the 4-H members in club work, both will benefit. The young people will learn more, and the adults will get to know other families and develop positive relationships with young people.

What Can Families Do?

Families can help their own children select, finance, and manage their 4-H projects. This is especially important for young members. Young people often need encouragement to continue their projects.

More specific things that family members may do include the following:

- Hold meetings in their homes;
- Help with project work;
- Encourage record-keeping activities;
- Help members get to meetings and events;
- Help to secure other qualified adults to assist with projects and activities;
- Help members select, finance, and manage projects
- Attend 4-H meetings and events;
- Serve on committees to help plan and conduct events;

- Encourage the youth to participate in special 4-H events;
- Be a 4-H booster in the community;
- Provide food when asked for by the 4-H club;
- Read the 4-H newsletters that come into their homes;
- Offer to assist the club leader with some task;
- Share skills or knowledge by volunteering to be an assistant 4-H club leader, activity leader, or project leader for the club;
- Serve as a judge for some events;
- Be up-to-date on the 4-H information in the county; and
- Help members conduct project work.



How Should the Organization Volunteer Leader Involve Families?

Keep family members informed about 4-H. Be sure they know the following:

- What 4-H is and the opportunities it offers;
- What is expected of their youths;
- The names of the 4-H volunteers and their responsibilities;
- The financial cost to members and families;
- The time, place, and topic of the 4-H meetings. It is important families feel involved from the beginning. “Enroll” the family when you enroll the member. Hold a special meeting for family members at the beginning of the year to get acquainted and to explain 4-H. Be sure that each family has a copy of the 4-H member handbook and enrollment guide. Give them the opportunity to choose the way they will be involved in the work of the club. Family members will understand why the club needs their help if they know the club plan. Ask families to help. Ask them to do specific tasks related to their interests. Describe clearly what is needed. Be sure the family members see meaningful and challenging aspects of the task. Adult family members need material and information to help their children grow and develop in 4-H. Visit members’ homes shortly after they join 4-H and get to know their families. Use these ideas for successful home visits:



- Let families know you would like to visit and then find a time convenient for all involved;
- Don’t complain or demand help during your visit. Use a positive reason for your first visit; for example, explain the purpose and aims of 4-H; tell about your local program; describe the child’s project, providing 4-H manuals or describing a special achievement their child has made.
- Include the 4-H’er in your conversation with other family members.
- Explain your role as a 4-H volunteer. Be sure adult family members understand you are a volunteer and ways they can help the youth by working with you.
- Explain what is expected of the 4-H member. Adults should know what project their children are taking and the responsibilities they have in the club.
- Give at least one genuinely deserved compliment and one challenge during your visit. Use a “Family Interest Survey” found in this publication at the family meeting or during the home visit. This will help you find out how family members would like to be involved.

How Families Can Be Recognized

We all like to know our efforts are appreciated. Family members are no different. Recognize their efforts and encourage 4-H’ers to say “thank you” to their family members for their help. Write personal notes of thanks for specific jobs. Recognize the help of family members by including their names and, whenever possible, pictures in newspaper reports and newsletters. The club may hold a “Family Appreciation Night.” This could include exhibits and refreshments or a meal prepared by the 4-H’ers. The program could include talent by members and recognition of the parents. Present certificates or 4-H “favors” in appreciation of their help.

Summary

4-H'ers gain confidence and feel supported when their family members are involved in 4-H. Involvement in 4-H gives the adult a feeling of contributing to the community and of being helpful to young people. Communicate with family members about club work, ask them to do specific tasks related to their interests, and thank them for their cooperation and support.



Family Interest Survey

Please check those things you will be willing to do when your local 4-H Club needs them.

- ____ 1. Lend kitchen, backyard, living room, garage, or basement for meetings.
- ____ 2. Help provide refreshments.
- ____ 3. Organize a carpool for transportation to and from 4-H meetings.
- ____ 4. Drive in a carpool for transportation to and from 4-H meetings.
- ____ 5. Provide chaperone ____ and/or transportation ____ for a tour, picnic, contest, clinic, workshop, camp, party, or other 4-H activity.
- ____ 6. Help contact families for last-minute announcements.
- ____ 7. Encourage 4-H members to start and complete projects on time.
- ____ 8. Help my 4-H'er obtain materials or equipment needed for 4-H project and see to it that he or she brings them to the meeting when necessary.
- ____ 9. Encourage my youth to have exhibits and visual presentations completed and delivered on time, with all information as stated in project instructions and county rules.
- ____ 10. Urge my 4-H'er to attend all meetings.
- ____ 11. Assist with 4-H projects (list). _____
- ____ 12. Share a hobby with the group. Family member hobbies: _____
- ____ 13. Other volunteers' interests. I am interested in helping with the following:
 - ____ 4-H tours ____ Public speaking ____ 4-H picnic ____ Visual presentations
 - ____ 4-H achievement night/day ____ Judging ____ 4-H camp ____ Showmanship
 - ____ Fund raising ____ Assist at fair or exhibit days ____ Community service project
 - ____ Fashion revue ____ Other _____

Name: _____ 4-H member's name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Occupation: _____

Publication 610 (POD-12-19)

Distributed in Mississippi by **Rae Oldham**, PhD, Extension Professor, Plant and Soil Sciences.



Copyright 2019 by Mississippi State University. All rights reserved. This publication may be copied and distributed without alteration for nonprofit educational purposes provided that credit is given to the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Produced by Agricultural Communications.

Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution. Discrimination in university employment, programs, or activities based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by applicable law is prohibited. Questions about equal opportunity programs or compliance should be directed to the Office of Compliance and Integrity, 56 Morgan Avenue, P.O. 6044, Mississippi State, MS 39762, (662) 325-5839.

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director