

NEW * LEADERS

Letter 5: 4-H Activities

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Dear Leader:

Now that you've had several club meetings and the members are excited about their project work, you'd probably like to know about the many educational 4-H activities available to your members.

Club activities

Social Activities. In addition to regular meetings, field trips, tours, and special activity days, some clubs also plan social events such as holiday parties, potluck dinners, picnics, parents' programs, swimming parties, skating parties, trail rides, or campouts. These activities allow members to get to know one another better, help them learn to get along with others, promote team spirit, and are fun!

Community Service Projects. One 4-H goal is to help members become caring, contributing citizens of their communities. Therefore, every club is encouraged to work on a community service project of its choosing. Some clubs share something related to their project areas with older people in retirement or nursing homes, such as taking pets

for the residents to see, making special holiday favors, holding fashion shows, or just visiting. Other clubs work on environmental projects like recycling, cleaning up trash, building and maintaining nature paths, or planting flowers and shrubs. Some clubs provide assistance to those in need with activities like hosting special events for young or disadvantaged children. As your club members grow and mature, they may decide on long-term projects to be developed or repeated over several years.

Recognition activities. Many 4-H clubs have special recognition activities to acknowledge members for their contributions and achievements. *The Illinois Clover* provides an explanation of four categories of recognition and the items available to be awarded for each. Usually families and friends are invited to the ceremonies providing an opportunity to explain the club's activities and goals.

County/Unit activities

During the 4-H year, each county or unit has many activities in which you and your members are encouraged to participate. It's helpful to know what these are at the beginning of the year so you can plan accordingly.

Project workshops. Many counties or units schedule workshops in various project areas, such as large and small animal clinics, horse clinics, dog obedience training; or have

project meetings for subjects like foods, clothing, flower arranging, rocketry, conservation, visual arts, or leadership.



Project workshops may also be offered on a regional or statewide basis.

Judging and identification contests. Your county/unit may have judging and identification contests in several areas, such as livestock and horticulture. These are contests in which the individual 4-H member identifies and/or ranks several items in a class. Publications relating to these contests are listed in *The Illinois Clover*.



Public presentations. Presentations are informative talks or demonstrations given by individual 4-H members, or teams, on any topic they choose. They can be given to a member's own club, at public gatherings, and at the county/unit 4-H public presentations contest. Presentations contests can include formal and illustrated speeches, extempore speaking, demonstrations, master of ceremonies, oral interpretations, and original works. County winners may be selected for State Fair. You might want to invite older 4-H'ers with experience in giving presentations to help teach this skill to your club.

4-H Show/Fair. One of the major activities of the 4-H year is the County/Unit 4-H Show or Fair. 4-H members have the opportunity to exhibit products made and skills learned in their projects during the year.

Exhibits are usually judged against an objective standard, not against each other. The best projects and exhibits may then be selected to be taken to the State Fair. Most counties use conference judging for non-livestock projects at their 4-H shows. In this method of judging, 4-H members discuss their project exhibits with the judge. They talk about what they did and learned during the project, and the judge offers positive comments and suggestions for possible improvements in future projects. Often, this is one of the 4-Hers' most helpful learning experiences of the year.

4-H camp. Illinois has camp programs available for 4-H members and clubs. Many options are offered at the different camp sites, and campers can participate in a variety of activities, such as swimming, canoeing, hiking, and crafts. There

are camps planned for younger members and teens, as well as camp counselor-in-training programs for older youth. Ask your local Extension staff when the camps for your unit are scheduled.

Regional 4-H activities

From time to time, many regions offer activities and conferences for the members in their regions. Some examples include: junior leaders' conference, legislative conferences, camps and retreats. For information on specific events in your region, ask your local Extension contact.

State 4-H activities

Illinois 4-H Teen Event. This event, held each June, gives high school age youth an opportunity to attend various workshops, participate in group activities and hear inspiring speakers while meeting other Illinois teens. Registration information is available in Extension units each spring.

State 4-H Judging Contests. State judging contests are held in June on or near the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. These contests give 4-H members the opportunity to test their judging skills against official standards. Other events held during June include a rocket launch contest, demonstrations, speaking contests, and quiz bowls. Horse quiz bowl contests are held other times during the year. Winners may be selected for teams to compete on the national level.

Illinois State Fair Junior Show. Opportunities at the State Fair include project exhibits in both livestock and non-livestock classes, the Photography Display, Art Display, Performance Showcase, and 4-H Promotional Windows. Entries for non-livestock projects are selected at the county level.

Performance Showcase offers 4-H members the opportunity to perform in front of State Fair audiences. Individual and group acts are

auditioned by videotape, and those selected are able to attend various performance workshops, as well as perform in shows at the State Fair and other 4-H events.

Exceptional visual arts and photography exhibits at State Fair may be chosen for display at the State 4-H Office in Champaign.

Scholarships. Many counties have scholarship assistance available for 4-H members applying to attend 4-H summer camps, Illinois 4-H teen events or special workshops. Scholarships for youth from economically-disadvantaged families are also offered by the Illinois 4-H Foundation. Apply through your unit.

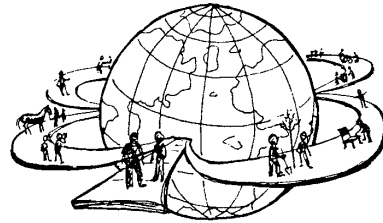
National 4-H activities

National 4-H Week. National 4-H Week is the first full week in October. Clubs and units may use this week to promote 4-H in their areas. Promotional literature regarding National 4-H Week is distributed to the units.

Citizenship Washington Focus. 4-H members, age 15 to 19, have the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., for one week during the summer, every even year. They stay at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland, while participating in citizenship programs and touring the city.

National 4-H Youth Congress. National 4-H Youth Congress is a conference for state award winners. It recognizes the nation's outstanding 4-H youth in project work and 4-H leadership and achievement and provides them with continued educational development through tours, educational seminars and meetings with motivational speakers.

National 4-H Conference. National 4-H Conference, held at the National 4-H Center, is usually attended by teen members of the state 4-H youth leadership team and their coordinators. During this conference, delegates have the opportunity to assist with and influence future 4-H programming.



International opportunities

The current mission of the 4-H International Program is to further cross-cultural understanding and international development through the study and exchange of human and technical resources. 4-H members and their families have many opportunities for cross-cultural experiences. 4-H families can host international exchangees involved with youth groups similar to 4-H in countries throughout the world. 4-H members can also travel to other countries for varying lengths of time. Contact the State 4-H Office for more information.

As you can see, there are many activities for your 4-H members to choose from. Encourage your members to participate in as many activities as possible. The more they participate, the more they will gain from their 4-H experience.

Good luck!!

Your Unit Staff of University of Illinois Extension

