

Opportunities for 4-H Leaders

Mary Jo Williams, State 4-H Youth Development Specialist

Missouri 4-H Center for Youth Development

Dear Leader:

As you become more comfortable with the various aspects of the 4-H program, you'll want to challenge yourself to take on new leadership experiences and training. You have probably discovered that, along with members, you are gaining new knowledge and skills.

There are many opportunities available for 4-H leaders to learn more about the 4-H program or specific subject matter area, to make new friends, and to develop additional skills. Your county 4-H newsletter will probably announce events as they occur, but you can ask about upcoming opportunities.

Youth leaders can help

A possible source of leadership help with your club may be a youth leader. Older youth may provide leadership for a project, an activity, or help with the organization of the club. Some teens take on full responsibility for organization or project leadership. Club leadership gives members an opportunity to help others and to grow and develop skills and abilities through practice.

In some areas, the term "teen leader" is used for teens who take on formal club leadership roles. The exact age for young people to take on club leadership is flexible. Members who serve as leaders should have the respect of the other club members. They need to be successful with their project work and to be responsible, showing concern for the club



In this letter you'll find:

- Youth leaders can help
- Opportunities at the county or club level
- Opportunities at the regional and state levels
- Opportunities at the national level
- Other resources for 4-H leaders
- Thanks for volunteering!

and the other members.

All members should be encouraged to take on leadership assignments from the beginning of their 4-H careers and to increase responsibility as their skills develop. Through this process, most members should be ready for formal leadership assignments in their teen years. For safety purposes, teen leaders should work under the supervision of a recognized adult leader.

Opportunities at the county/club level

New 4-H leader orientation

You may have already attended an orientation or new leader workshop conducted by the club leadership, youth staff and/or experienced volunteer. If not, find out when the next meeting will be held.

Leader meetings

One of the best ways to stay up to date with the 4-H program, to learn new skills and to find out what other leaders are doing is by attending county or multi-county leader meetings. Project leader training may be general or for a specific project area such as animal science, visual arts or horticulture.

County or club 4-H activities

Consider becoming a member of a planning committee or a volunteer organizer of one of the many county or club level 4-H activities such as fair superintendent or assistant, contest coordinator, workshop presenter or camp director, camp counselor or day camp coordinator.

4-H leaders are the key to a successful 4-H program. Leader participation in county 4-H activities helps the program be successful; and leaders find they become more effective while developing their own skills.

County or club 4-H activities

Each county has an extension council that functions as an advisory

group related to all county programming. Many counties have an organized group that meets on a regular basis to discuss the county's 4-H program, review 4-H activities, and plan 4-H programs and events. Committees or leader groups supporting the 4-H program vary by county.

You can find out more about all aspects of the local 4-H program by attending the county 4-H leaders meeting or talk with county staff or volunteer committee members.

Opportunities at the multi-county, regional and state levels

Regional events

Regional events such as energizers are usually held in the spring. At these events, you can learn about what others are doing to make their 4-H program exciting, and you can participate in a number of workshops. It's a great way to meet other 4-H volunteers.

North Central Regional

Volunteer e-Forum

Every other year, the North Central Regional Volunteer Specialists bring volunteers from the 12 North Central region states together virtually through an e-forum. These two-hour webinars present cutting-edge information to help volunteers work with 4-H members.

Publications and Web pages

In addition to the various materials listed in these letters, you'll find numerous publications and resources available through your local University of Missouri Extension center. 4-H at various levels is now making large volumes of information available on the Internet. You may want to check out the following resources.

- MU Extension publication Y603, *4-H Clover* contains information and project listings for 4-H'ers and families. It also has listings of leader's guides and other

publications for use by leaders and other volunteers.

- MU Extension publication Y602, *4-H Spirit* contains an update on what is happening in Missouri 4-H. It is prepared by the Missouri 4-H Foundation office and mailed biannually.
- The *National 4-H Source Book* lists gifts, clothing, resource materials and award items with the 4-H emblem that can be ordered from the National 4-H Council.
- Leader's guides are offered with many of the 4-H projects in which 4-H'ers may enroll. These guides provide guidance on working with members and extra information to volunteers who are helping youth in specific project areas. Look for the listing of these guides along with the projects in the Missouri *4-H Clover*.
- New Missouri 4-H Web pages are developed daily at <http://www.4h.missouri.edu>. They include information especially for 4-H leaders, along with resources for the public, members and staff.
- MU Extension's website, <http://extension.missouri.edu>, gives links to state and county extension programs.
- The National 4-H website, maintained by the USDA, is: <http://www.4h-usa.org/>
- The National 4-H Council's website, <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu>, includes links to state pages, as well as counties and clubs throughout the nation.

Other resources for 4-H leaders

Contact your local MU Extension center if you are interested in one of these resources:

- LG782, *Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development*
- LG784, *4-H Project Leader*
- LG783, *Learning by Doing* 4-H Project Leader Audiotape
- 4-H Project Leader CD-ROM
- LG744, *4-H Demonstrations*

LG730, *Judging: A 4-H Teaching Technique*

You can also find some of these and other helpful resources online: <http://4h.missouri.edu/resources/materials/category.htm#project>.

Also, check out the volunteer online orientation:

<http://4h.missouri.edu/getinvolved/volunteer/#orientation>.

Thanks for volunteering!

We hope the information in these letters has been helpful to you. We know it is a challenge to be a 4-H leader, and we also know it can be one of the most rewarding experiences you will have — helping young people develop into successful, caring and productive citizens.

Welcome to the role of volunteer 4-H leader!

Character is important

Missouri 4-H recognizes the importance of good character in everything that is done. 4-H staff and volunteers, as well as 4-H members and their families, know that a person of character:

- is a good person, someone to look up to and admire
- knows the difference between right and wrong and always tries to do what is right
- sets a good example
- makes the world a better place
- lives according to the **Six Pillars of Character** — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

Adapted from Dodd, M.A., L. Hoglum, and M. Robinson (1998). *Letters to New 4-H Leaders*. Oregon State University Cooperative Extension Service, Corvallis, Ore.

