

Recruiting Volunteers

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Concepts and methods

Volunteer leaders are necessary to the continued growth and development of the 4-H program. There are no easy solutions or surefire answers in recruiting, but there are tried and true concepts and methods that have worked for others and might work to recruit volunteers for your program. **It is important to understand volunteers are essential to a successful program.**

Concepts and methods to apply to recruiting include:

» Service

Many people have a desire to serve. In your conversations and actions, model this for potential volunteers.

» Group membership

People like to be a part of popular and active organizations. Show enthusiasm for 4-H. Tradition and custom are strong draws for most.

» Public opinion

People respect the 4-H approach to youth development. Use this positive public opinion to inform potential volunteers of program needs.

» Self-interest

People like to demonstrate their abilities. Look for special interests and talents. Provide opportunities for volunteers to use their talents and skills to enhance your program.

» Family involvement

Try to involve parents and grandparents of 4-H members

» Before you recruit

Some hard questions to ask before



you start include: Do I really want volunteers to help in a meaningful way? Do I expect volunteers to do the things I don't want to do? Would I volunteer to help in this situation? What will the volunteer get out of the job?

» Steps in recruiting

1. Determine the needs of the program. Decide which jobs need to be accomplished and the qualifications they require.
2. Compile a list of possible recruits
3. Match potential volunteers to the available jobs
4. Make personal contact
5. Involve the new volunteer as soon as possible

Determine needs

Know which kind of leader you need, whether organizational, club, project, resource or activity leaders. Know which specific jobs you need volunteers to do. Larger clubs might need more volunteers than a smaller or single-project club.

Write job descriptions to clearly outline tasks. The job description should include:

- Length of time for the job, whether one-time or ongoing
- Time required
- Skills required
- Training required

Job descriptions help make recruiting and training volunteers easier.

Identify potential volunteers

- Ask 4-H members. They often know adults who enjoy working with their age group.
- Consider senior citizens, who might have more time, experience and skills to contribute
- Consider which organizations in your community have similar goals and purposes
- Ask teachers for suggestions. Those who work with young people can often identify others who are interested in youth.
- Use the local media. Mass media gets your message to the public.

Match job and people

Once you have a list of tasks and potential volunteers, consider which individual is best suited to the job. Match the volunteer and task so he or she can experience success in the role and make a positive contribution to the program. Take time to learn as much as possible about the potential volunteer before making a personal

contact. Everyone has something that can be shared.

The first contact

First meetings are crucial.

- Be friendly and sincere
- Be open about the importance of the job
- Help the volunteer see some challenge in the task
- Help the volunteer see how the job will be a personal, family and community benefit
- Give clear and reasonable position expectations
- Let the volunteer know the specific time period the task will take
- Involve the new volunteer in the program as soon as possible

Contact prospective volunteers

Although there are several ways to contact individuals, the person-to-person approach is the most productive. Choose a time and place convenient for the individual. Don't ask for a commitment over the phone.

Groups can contact individuals. For example, teen groups often do a good job recruiting their own volunteer leaders. Individuals could also contact groups. For example, the recruiter could speak to a PTA, church or other special group about the need for volunteers.

Keep in mind your recruitment might be more effective if the person doing the recruiting already knows the prospective volunteer. Be sure the people who make contact are well prepared for any questions.

Be interested the person as an individual. If they sense your only interest is to get them to do what you want, they might never volunteer.

Discuss and clarify the task with the individual. At the same time, you might need to convince the person

the task is achievable by referring either to the individual's past successes or needed qualifications you see in the person. Start small and be specific. The word leader might scare off some people!

Encourage the person to state his or her needs, interests and expectations. It is important that people who are about to donate their time have an opportunity to ask all their questions and think over how and when they might best serve.

The person also needs to know about the training that is available. Discuss both training and on-the-job support.

Break a big task into reasonable pieces. If you ask someone to volunteer to be a 4-H leader, you might receive no for an answer, but if you say you are looking for two or three adults to work with a group of youths, you might get yes for an answer.

Ask for specific time commitments. Asking someone to lead a 4-H food project might get a no response. But if you said the 4-H food group is having a meeting at the school next week and asked the person to teach the group to make a pizza, the answer might be yes.

Be complimentary and not apologetic when you ask for help. Leading a question about volunteering with a statement such as, "I know you're busy, but we can't find anyone to lead the club," would likely get no for an answer. But stating, "The fifth-grade girls want to have a 4-H food project and they asked if you could be one of their leaders," might get a yes answer.

Although you might not get an unqualified yes, you could increase the number of positive responses by the way you ask for help.

Follow-up

Soon after the initial recruitment visit, follow up with another personal

contact. Call to see how the person feels about the opportunity, write a personal letter or set up a coffee hour or home visit. Regardless of the method, follow-up is a crucial factor in motivating the volunteer.

When the volunteer has been selected and has, in fact, said yes, the next step is to have him or her complete the University of Missouri Extension publication LG 636, *Missouri 4-H Volunteer Application Form*. Once the application successfully passes through the screening process, and the volunteer receives notice of his or her status, the final step is to put the volunteer to work as soon as possible while his or her interest is high.

Successful volunteers

Help volunteers succeed by:

- Breaking the job into small pieces
- Explaining or demonstrating how to do the job
- Allowing a chance to practice the job
- Welcoming questions
- Assuring help will be available when needed
- Helping obtain materials and equipment
- Complimenting them for a job well done

Special recruitment drives

Always look out for good volunteers. Recruitment is a year-round process, but special drives could give the program a boost.

To hold a drive:

- Organize a recruitment group of 4-H supporters
- Select a place and time to begin and end, and stay within that time frame
- Meet with the group and plan a strategy
- Compile a list of prospects