

# 4-H VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT

## Human Resource Development

Most county Extension agents would likely agree that their concerns with the 4-H program center on two separate but closely related factors.

1. Available leadership
2. Parent/supporting adult interest and cooperation

Most agents would also agree that there is no limit to the extent and effectiveness of the 4-H program, if these two factors are abundant. The interest and participation of parents in 4-H is highly important to the tenure of leaders and members and to the overall effectiveness of the 4-H program. In today's society, we also have to look at the other supporting adults who may be involving youth in 4-H activities, such as grandparents, non-custodial parents, relatives, family friends, foster parents or just concerned adults, so we will use the terms "parents" and "supporting adults" synonymously. Many leaders and Extension agents are concerned because they feel too few parents/supporting adults are participating.

County Extension Agents and volunteers in key leadership roles should consider the following factors regarding volunteers.

1. Parents/supporting adults should be asked to help. Asking for help in a large group setting is rarely effective. If individuals are approached with specific tasks they will more likely volunteer.
2. Parents/supporting adults need to be reassured and recognized for doing good work, particularly by the people who asked them to assume a responsibility.
3. Parents/supporting adults need to be better informed about 4-H work. They get information by attending meetings, assisting at community and project meetings and tours, and by assuming leadership responsibilities.
4. Leaders and agents should request the parents'/supporting adults' help rather than assume they will volunteer. Today's volunteer will more likely commit to several weeks with specific tasks. The old days of "volunteering for 20 years" does not match with today's society.
5. Leaders and agents should continually practice the process of "growing" parents/supporting adults into volunteers by getting them involved and then progressively giving them larger responsibilities.
6. A variety of ways need to be developed through which parents with different talents, means and amounts of time can participate. Not all people do the same thing well, and it takes some analysis to find who can, and will, do certain tasks. (The person who will never speak in a public meeting will build a booth or float, etc.)
7. Special efforts should be made recruit a diverse population of volunteers to add strength and depth to the 4-H experience.
8. Job descriptions should be utilized so that duties of the volunteer role is clear from the beginning and the volunteer knows the length of the commitment.

## Benefits of Parent Participation

Through research and experience, active parent/supporting adult participation has proven to have positive effects on 4-H, 4-H clubs/groups and 4-H members. These benefits are listed below.

It is important to the 4-H member:

- Studies found that boys and girls do better 4-H work when parents show their interest not only by words but by deeds.
- When parents/supporting adults participate in the 4-H program, the 4-H member gains support, confidence, assurance and a feeling of security that he might not have otherwise.

It is important to the 4-H parent/supporting adult:

- Extending a helping or encouraging hand to a boy or girl is one of the finest ways parents/supporting adults can express

affection to their children or to other youth.

- 4-H is a family affair, offering parents/supporting adults many opportunities to participate in a program where both child and adult may become involved in common interests and strengthen family unity.
- 4-H provides a means for contributing to the community.

It is important to the 4-H program:

- When parental support is positive, the chances are good for a club/group to become stronger, larger and more active.
- In clubs/groups where parental support is good, individual club/group members receive more personal attention and guidance from leaders and parents/supporting adults.
- Club/group activities and events will develop and expand with the added support of parents/supporting adults. 4-H has a positive influence on the lives of thousands of boys and girls. This happens only when parents/ supporting adults care enough to share their time, efforts and talents.

How Agents Can Encourage Participation:

- Develop a parent/supporting adult interest or volunteer sheet and make it available to all clubs/groups for use in recruiting parents/supporting adults to help in various ways.
- Conduct an orientation to explain what 4-H is and the opportunities for new parents each year. There are several ways this can be done.
- Train new member/family coordinators to do this job in each 4-H club/group.
- Provide a countywide orientation program
- Mail a letter series to parents of each new member who joins.
- Mail a letter of welcome explaining the importance of parent/supporting adult participation to each new family.

### Parent/Supporting Adult 4-H Pledge

I pledge my HEAD to give my child the information I can, to help him or her see things clearly and to make wise decisions.

I pledge my HEART to encourage and support my child no matter whether he or she has successes or disappointments.

I pledge my HANDS to help my child's club/group; if I cannot be a leader, I can help in equally important ways.

I pledge my HEALTH to keep my child strong and well for a better world through 4-H, for my child's club, our community, our country and our world.

### Texas 4-H Friends & Alumni Association

The Texas 4-H Friends and Alumni Association provides an opportunity for former 4-H members and friends of the 4-H program to give back to the organization that has meant so much to them and for friends of the 4-H program to ensure the continuance of 4-H for the youth of Texas. The association's goal are:

1. Provide scholarships and grants for deserving youth, adults and programs for state and national level trainings and recognition events.
2. Develop programs for training and recognition.
3. Interpret programs. Example: Purchase of program exhibits and displays.
4. Offer mini-grants for unique district and county programs.

### Marketing Ideas for Recruitment of 4-H Friends and Alumni Members

These are ideas for events and activities to market 4-H and collect the names and addresses of 4-H friends and alumni.

- Exhibit/display booth at county fairs, stock shows and other 4-H events
- 4-H Family Fair
- Club members canvas family and friends for names of former members, with a contest for the most names submitted
- National 4-H Week promotion
- National 4-H Week scavenger hunt for 4-H friends and alumni
- Proclamation by county judge of "4-H Friends and Alumni Month"
- Displays at malls, businesses, banks, restaurants, etc.
- Exhibits at local celebration
- Ask local businesses and corporations to distribute 4-H friends and alumni information through their e-mail, employee newsletters or bulletin boards
- Promote through TEEA members and other program area committees
- Develop a list of graduating high school and college seniors
- Provide a media packet to Welcome Wagon/newcomer contacts, newspapers, magazines, chamber of commerce, etc.
- Radio and TV PSAs — hold a press conference to publicize the 4-H Friends and Alumni Association

- Provide media with human interest story (oldest 4-H member, Gold Star winners, etc.)
- Develop a history list from old files
- Write the history from old files
- Write the history of 4-H in your county
- 4-H banquets and other activities to recognize 4-H friends and alumni
- 4-H billboards (some can be donated)
- Tray liners or place mats in fast food and other family restaurants
- Donors distribute 4-H friends and alumni information through newsletters, publications, "things" they give away
- Duplicate and mail 4-H friends and alumni information with annual tax statements, utility bills or bank statements

### ***Suggested Ways of Involving 4-H Friends and Alumni***

You are encouraged to add to this list other ways to involve 4-H friends and alumni.

- Direct Programs -- Volunteers who provide programs directly to 4-H on a one-to-one or small-group basis.
  - Club manager
  - Method demonstration volunteer
  - Camp instructor
  - Judging team coach
  - Ambassador advisor
  - Programs for clubs/groups
  - Project leader
  - Resource instructor (one or two lessons)
  - Judge
- Service to Other Volunteers -- Volunteers who work directly in the areas of recruitment, placement, training and servicing of other volunteers. Examples include volunteer recruiter, volunteer trainer, volunteer manager, spokesperson for 4-H or any other capacity that can benefit your program.
- Indirect Services -- Volunteers may have some, little or no involvement in providing educational programs directly to 4-H members or other 4-H volunteers. They can provide service to the 4-H program indirectly. The following are some ideas.
  - Become donors/sponsors
  - Establish and maintain alumni files
  - Coordinate transportation
  - Edit 4-H newsletter
  - Serve as a fair clerk
  - Write grant proposal
  - Serve as camp cook
  - Print newsletters and brochures
  - Provide space for exhibits, contests, meetings, etc.,
- Advocate -- Some volunteers are needed to speak out, to seek public and private resources for the support of 4-H programs. The general public, agency or organization officials may be their specific audience.
  - Raise funds
  - Write and share 4-H history
  - Seek sponsorships supporting 4-H in their advertisements
  - Serve as a speaker
- Administration -- Those who provide administrative services to program areas other than local 4-H clubs and groups. Volunteers can serve as:
  - Camp director
  - Exchange tour director
  - Treasurer
  - Citizenship tour manager
  - Fair superintendent
- Policy -- Volunteers serve on county, district and state-wide policy advising groups.
  - 4-H and Youth Committee member
  - Program review committees
  - County Fair Board
  - Texas 4-H Foundation Board