

STRATEGIES FOR HOSTING SUCCESSFUL 4-H MEETINGS

First ask yourself why we have a 4-H Meeting in the first place, or more importantly ask youth and their parents why they come to a 4-H meeting. Parents and Adult Leaders will answer the question a little more altruistically than youth. They will tell, you things, like: Education, project information, leadership etc. Youth may also mention these same reasons but more often than not they will start with, FUN!!!! And from there they will move on to: Seeing friends, meeting new people, seeing boys/girls. When planning a successful club meeting it's important we keep both of these audiences in mind, both the parents and the youth, and also keep in mind there are a myriad of other activities competing for their time:

Here are a few things to keep in mind when planning the meeting:

- **Remind** everyone of the meeting time and place REPEATEDLY!! Folks are busy and they forget.
- **Shoot for 60 minutes:** It has to be worth their time to come to the meeting, but they also need to get out of there and do the other things on their evening to do list.
- **Fun!!!** Never compromise the fun for the sake of "education". Youth have typically spent a full day at school being educated before coming to the 4-H meeting. They do not come to sit and listen to more lectures.
- **Leadership:** Leadership for everyone should be your goal. How can we involve as many of the members as possible in conducting the meeting? If they have a responsibility at the meeting they are more likely to show up and to come back. Be creative, think about Committee reports, Pledges, Inspirations, Project Reports, Refreshments, etc.... you get the idea, try to involve everyone.
- **Welcome:** New members especially need to feel like they are in a place where they belong. The role of the club manager and maybe even a welcoming committee should be to meet all the new members and introduce them to the group. NEVER and I mean NEVER ask new members to stand up and introduce themselves. They are in a room full of strangers. The last thing you want to do is make them stand up and face their greatest fear: PUBLIC SPEAKING!
- **Empower:** As a club manager you should challenge your leadership team (club officers) to be prepared and conduct the meeting on their own. This means, planning, scripting, or whatever else is required to make the meeting a success. After considering this, then also be realistic.... These are kids. Be prepared to offer a safety net and provide the resources where they have dropped the ball
- **Preparation:** As a club manager, have the meeting ready to go before you arrive. This will allow you to focus on the things you did not plan on, and there will be things you did not plan on.
- **Less is More!!!** Use the old adage from show business. "Always leave 'em wanting more". When the meeting is over, youth should be saying "don't stop now." If they want more they will come back next month to get it.

A Check list to help you with planning a successful club meeting:

- Educational program is planned and it is fun and appropriate for the age of the group.
- Each member of the leadership team knows what's expected of them.
- All responsibilities for other adults have been communicated.
- Facility for meeting is secured.
- Meeting time is posted and communicated to all members.
- Members know the purpose of the scheduled meeting.
- There is an opportunity for all members to be involved in the meeting.
- Information is ready to send home with new members.
- Recreation is planned.
- Refreshments will be provided (feed 'em and they will come)!

FIVE TIPS TO BE SUCCESSFUL AS A 4-H CLUB MANAGER

Compiled by Derrick Bruton and Laura Huebinger

Maintain good communication with your local county Extension office.

- Your County Extension Agents, Program Assistants, and county support staff are all there to support you. Feel free to ask questions!
- They can provide you with project resources to allow for success in project work.

Establish and maintain relationships with 4-H families.

- Readily share as much information with families as you have. You never know what might spark the interest of a particular member!
- Get to know families on a personal level so that you can help direct them to the projects and activities that they will be most interested in.
- Recognize the youth and the other adults in the club that assist to make the club successful. It can be a short thank you note sent to the person or a public acknowledgement in front of the club.

Practice the 4 Steps to a Successful 4-H Club Meeting

- Inspiration (5 minutes to open a meeting and bring the group together)
- Business (15-20 minutes to conduct business of the club and share reports)
- Program (15-20 minutes of educational program)
- Recreation (15-20 minutes of fun, hands-on activities)

Let the club and community drive the projects and goals of the club.

- If the 4-H members are truly interested in a project and are able to take ownership, the project instantly becomes more successful.
- Enthusiasm
- Interests
- Parental support
- Community support
- Learn what your 4-H families are interested in and let those interests help guide projects the club

Make it **FUN!**

- Remember why you are doing this....for the kids!
- Parents will bring their children back to the club meetings if the kids are truly having fun and learning something in the process.
- Make sure to allow time for "kids to be kids."
- Keep in mind the 4-H slogan: "Learn by doing."