# Parent Involvement in 4-H

At its best, 4-H is a family affair. Parent involvement is one of the keys to a successful 4-H club. It provides an ongoing base for club support, increases the opportunities for teaching and learning valuable life skills, and expands the potential for interesting and exciting 4-H programs. Active, involved, supportive parents mean active members, additional resources for leaders, a thriving 4-H program, and expanded support for a community’s youth development.

Parent/guardian participation in 4-H results in the following benefits:

• Family involvement in 4-H offers opportunities where both child and parent participate with common interest, strengthening family ties.

• Active parent participation can strengthen and broaden the 4-H program in any local club or in any county.

• When parental support is positive, a club or group is likely to become stronger, larger, and more active.

• In clubs where parental support is evident, individual members receive more personal attention and guidance from leaders and parents.

• Club activities and events will develop and expand with the additional support of parents. 4-H can have a positive influence on the lives of thousands of boys and girls. This happens when parents care enough to share their time, efforts, and talents.

**Some ideas to help inform and interest parents:**

• Involve members and parents in setting goals and planning your club’s program

each year.

• Become familiar with the interests and special talents of your members’

parents. Ask for advice in areas where they can contribute, then make good use of good ideas. Be specific with requests.

• When parents volunteer to help, make sure they are involved in something

worthwhile. Make a note of their offer and return their call within a few days with some specific task in which they can help.

• Involve parents in sharing leadership as project leaders. Emphasize that they can teach a skill or project that may require only a few 4-H meetings for the entire year. If the parent enjoys this role, encourage them to become a certified 4-H volunteer.

* Keep parents informed. Help them understand the 4-H objectives. Send notes and letters directly to parents about the club program. Allow time for discussion before or after meetings with parents. E-mails are a great tool for keeping families informed. Be sure your club has a phone and/or email chain for emergency cancellations and important messages.

• Invite parents to club meetings. For new members and parents, you might want

to have a special meeting explaining the 4-H program and your club’s activities. Let parents know what is expected of their child.

• Recognize both members and their parents. Thank parents for their support and

contributions to the club program both personally and in public.

• Encourage members to make their 4-H work a topic of family conversation.

• Solicit parent involvement at 4-H fairs and other activities and events where 4-H

club work is showcased.

To help parents think about the many ways they can participate, try sharing the checklist for ‘The Interested 4-H Parent’ found in Appendix B. Many times they only need to see a list of suggestions to realize how their help can truly make a difference.

Adapted in part from:

[www.4-h.org/resource-library/4-h-volunteer-resources/organization](http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/4-h-volunteer-resources/organization)