

STARTING A 4-H CLUB

Informing the Community

New 4-H Clubs are usually organized by Extension Educators, 4-H leaders, or interested parents. Before starting a club, it is important to set the stage in the local neighborhood or community. Inform people about 4-H and arouse their interest. You might arrange talks at community meetings or discuss with your local newspaper reporter or editor how to publicize 4-H. Use radio and TV, and enlist the aid of every community group, Extension Educator, and other community leaders in your advertising program. Advertise by speaking to prospective members and their parents at a home or other appointed place. In short, by all available means, spread the word about your proposed 4-H club.

Planning the First Meeting

In planning the first meeting, be sure to give at least a week's, and preferably two weeks', notice. If possible, send special invitations to families with the right aged children. Outline the first meeting carefully. If 4-H is new to those you expect to attend, plan the meeting as an informal session and don't try to organize the club until the second meeting. Make the program interesting and limit it to an hour and a half. Remember, the first meeting will set the tone for those that follow.

The county 4-H Extension Educator or 4-H Aide would be happy to help in planning and conducting your first couple of meetings. You can get any supplies you may need from your county Extension office or from other 4-H leaders. Experienced 4-H members and leaders may also be available to help you plan and conduct the meeting. Call the Extension office for help. And if possible, enroll new leaders at your first few meetings.

The first meeting might proceed as follows: You and other organizers might arrive early to check the physical conditions (heat, ventilation, and seating,) and to greet others as they arrive and set them at ease.

- ♣ -Open the meeting with a brief review of 4-H and its leadership roles and organization.
- ♣ -Discuss the 4-H project areas, encouraging prospective members to choose one suited to their needs and interest. Suggest that families discuss together the choice of a project.
- ♣ -Pause for a question and answer session.
- ♣ -Have prospective members indicate their desire to join by a show of hands or in writing.
- ♣ -Stress the need for leaders in areas where interest has been expressed.
- ♣ -Decide the time and a place for the next meeting.
- ♣ -Close with songs, games, and refreshments.

Uniforms and Dues

4-H members are not required to wear uniforms or pay dues to Cooperative Extension or other sponsors. However, members may, if they wish, assess dues for their local club for any purpose they determine. Many clubs have dues of \$.25 to \$1.00 per meeting to help cover the cost of refreshments, project materials, and special club activities such as a parents' night, field trips, or community service activities.

Parent Cooperation

Parent support of 4-H is vital to the club's success. The greatest incentive to parent cooperation is cultivating a sense in them that they have something important to contribute. After all, they are the ones best suited to helping their child choose and carry out a project. And it is a parents' praise for a job well done that means the most to a child.

Parents' supposed apathy often stems from ignorance of what needs doing. You can help involve them in a variety of ways:

- ♣ -Invite them to 4-H meetings and events. Let them know what is expected and suggest ways they can help.
- ♣ -Maintain personal contact with them.
- ♣ -Whenever possible, ask each for specific help.
- ♣ -Form parent committees at the outset to help with community service, social activities, transportation, membership drives, and leader recruiting.
- ♣ -Hold a parents' night program at least once a year.
- ♣ Parents benefit as much as children from a thriving club. Parents will usually help a club that helps their child.

Planning the Second Meeting

The agenda of the second meeting follows naturally from the first:

- ♣ -You will undoubtedly describe 4-H in more detail, perhaps showing a video suggesting its scope and variety.
- ♣ -You might briefly discuss the 4-H symbols (emblem, colors, pledge and motto.)
- ♣ -New leaders should be introduced and new projects reviewed.
- ♣ -If members feel sufficiently well acquainted, you might hold the election of officers, or wait until a later meeting.
- ♣ -Adopt a constitution and by-laws.
- ♣ -Appoint a representative committee of officers, leaders, members and parents to plan the year's program.
- ♣ -Pass out materials explaining 4-H, project opportunities, leader training, etc.

The sample program on the last page will help you visualize one way of running a 4-H meeting. Every club meeting should include some recreation, especially if the majority of members are young. Often you will need to plan such activities for early arrivals. Active games and folk games are especially well suited to the closing section of the meeting.

Club Structure

Clubs using the team approach to leadership will call for two types of meetings: the general 4-H club meeting and the project group meeting.

All 4-H members meet with a club leader in a general club meeting. A sample format is attached. Such meetings include 4-H activities not directly related to a project. These meetings can be scheduled once a month, every other month, or as needed. They may coincide with the school year, but aren't limited to it.

Every part of the meeting should be well planned by the officers and club leaders. The club leader should be involved only as necessary in demonstrations and other educational programs. Take care to choose topics of interest to all for the general meeting program. The range of methods for presenting material is broad. Demonstrations, talks, panel discussions, outdoor explorations, videos, slides, guest speakers, judging, and quizzes are all among the possibilities. *Just remember that 4-H is about "Learning By Doing," so always try to keep the "presentation" part as brief and as possible and have most of the time spent in "hands-on" **doing** by the members.*

Remember that the 4-H philosophy is all about "learning by doing," so the program should be as hands-on and experiential as possible.

Between general club meetings, the project group members meet with a project leader to work on a specific project, such as knitting, space science, nature study, or small animals. At this meeting, the members would actually learn how to do some aspect of that particular project.

In conducting a project program:

- ♣ -Limit the group to one project, (photography,) or one project area, (mechanical sciences.) A mechanical science group meeting would be more effective if the numbers worked in small groups on project subjects within the area, such as "electricity" or "small engines."
- ♣ -If you do break up a project group, (foods,) do so by age level and ability.
- ♣ -If project members are young, have a project leader or teen leader for every four to five members. Younger members usually need more time and help than older members. Schedule their meetings more often.

The emphasis in project groups is on education, involvement, and doing. Here leaders, members, and outside resource people all help members explore the project subject or skill.