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## Starting a new 4-H Club

**Informing the Community**

Informing the community about newly organized 4-H clubs, and 4-H activities in general, is important. Please remember to involve, and get approval from, 4-H staff before publicizing anything, including 4-H fundraisers and other events. It is important for 4-H staff to create any flyers and media releases for approval in order to align with university policies.

**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.

County 4-H staff would be happy to help in planning and conducting your first couple of meetings. Experienced 4-H members and leaders may also be available to help you plan and conduct the meeting. Contact the Extension office for help. 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 Extension or other sponsors. Members may, if they wish, assess dues for their local club to help cover the cost of refreshments, project materials, and special club or community service activities. Donations are welcome. If your club decides they want to fundraise, contact your county 4-H staff to learn about acquiring a federal EIN, and fiscal accountability and responsibility.

**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. 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.
* 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.