

## Letters to New Leaders: Letter 5

# 4-H Activities

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*Dear Leader:*

*Now that you've had several club meetings and the members are excited about their project work, you'd probably like to know about the many educational 4-H activities available to your members.*

### Club activities

#### *Social activities*

In addition to regular meetings, field trips, tours and special activity days, some clubs also plan social events such as holiday parties, potluck dinners, picnics, parents' programs, swimming parties, skating parties, trail rides or campouts. These activities allow members to get to know one another better, help them learn to get along with others, promote team spirit and are fun!

#### *Community Service Projects*

One 4-H goal is to help members become caring, contributing citizens of their communities. Therefore, every club is encouraged to work on a community service project of its choosing. Some clubs share something related to their project areas with older people in retirement or nursing homes, such as taking pets for the residents to see, making special holiday favors, hold-



#### ***In this letter you'll find:***

- *Club activities.*
- *County activities.*
- *Regional 4-H activities.*
- *State 4-H activities.*
- *National 4-H activities.*
- *International opportunities.*

ing fashion shows or just visiting. Other clubs work on environmental projects like recycling, cleaning up trash, building and maintaining nature paths, or planting flowers and shrubs. Some clubs provide assistance to those in need with activities like hosting special events for young or disadvantaged children. As your club members grow and mature, they may decide on long-term projects to be developed or repeated over several years.

#### ***Recognition activities***

Many 4-H clubs have special recognition activities to acknowledge members and leaders for their contributions and achievements. Usually families and friends are invited to the ceremonies providing an opportunity to explain the club's activities and goals.

#### **County/club activities**

During the 4-H year, each county or club has many activities in which you and your members are encouraged to participate. It's helpful to know what these are at the beginning of the year so you can plan accordingly.

#### ***Project workshops***

Many counties or clubs schedule workshops in various project areas, such as large and small animal clinics, horse clinics, dog obedience training; or have project meetings for subjects like foods, clothing, flower arranging, conservation, visual arts or leadership. Project workshops may also be offered on a regional or statewide basis.

#### ***Judging and identification contests***

Your county/club may have judging and identification contests in several areas, such as live-

stock and horses. These are contests in which the individual 4-H member identifies and/or ranks several items in a class.

#### **Public presentations**

Presentations are informative talks or demonstrations given by individual 4-H members, or teams, on any topic they choose. They can be given to a member's own club, at public gatherings, and at the county/club 4-H demonstration and illustrated talks. Demonstration contest can include formal and illustrated speeches and demonstrations. County winners may be selected for the state fair. You might want to invite older 4-H'ers with experience in giving presentations to help teach this skill to your club.

#### **4-H show/fair**

One of the major activities of the 4-H year is the county fair. 4-H members have the opportunity to exhibit products made and skills learned in their projects during the year.

Exhibits are usually judged against an objective standard, not against each other. The best projects and exhibits may then be selected to be taken to the Missouri State Fair. Most counties use conference judging for non-livestock projects at their 4-H shows. In this method of judging, 4-H members discuss their project exhibits with the judge. They talk about what they did and learned during the project, and the judge offers positive comments and suggestions for possible improvements in future projects. Often, this is one of the 4-H'ers' most helpful learning experiences of the year.

#### **4-H camp**

Missouri has camp programs available for 4-H members and clubs. Many options are offered at the different camp sites, and campers can participate in a variety of activities, such as swimming, canoeing, hiking, archery and crafts. There are camps planned for younger members and teens, as well as camps counselor-in-training programs for older youths. Ask your local Outreach and Extension staff when the camps for your county is scheduled.

#### **Regional 4-H activities**

From time to time, many regions offer activities and conferences for the members in their regions. Examples include: teen leaders' lock-ins, camps and retreats. For information on specific events in your region, ask your local Outreach and Extension staff.

#### **State 4-H activities**

State 4-H Teen Conference. This first overnight state event is for 4-H members 12 and 13 years old. Participants attend workshops to help them develop their leadership skills, tour the University of Missouri-Columbia campus, meet other 4-H'ers from around the state and have a great time. Encourage club members to attend this special event.

#### **State 4-H judging contests.**

State judging contests are held annually (spring and fall) on or near the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. These events give 4-H members the opportunity to test their judging skills against official standards. Winning teams are determined to compete on the national level.

#### **State 4-H Congress**

Learning about an array of topics, sharing ideas with others, experiencing college dorm living, participating in the selection of the state 4-H council and having loads of fun is what state congress is all about. This event is planned by the state 4-H council and is meant for 4-H members 14 years and older.

#### **Missouri Youth Forum**

Held each summer in Jefferson City, Missouri Youth Forum helps 4-H members (14 years of age and older) learn more about state government and citizenship. Participants select a track to learn more about the legislative or judiciary branches of government or the media, and take an active role in learning how the process works.

#### **Missouri State Fair**

Opportunities at the state fair include project exhibits in both livestock and non-livestock classes. Entries are selected at the county level.

Demonstrations offer 4-H members the opportunity to perform in front of state fair audiences. Individual and team demonstrations are selected on the county level.

#### **Scholarships**

Many counties have scholarships available for 4-H members. Scholarships are also available through the Missouri 4-H Foundation. For more information or to apply, contact your local youth specialist.

#### **National 4-H activities**

##### **National 4-H Week**

National 4-H Week is the first

## How can I use the information in this letter?

1. New ideas to use in our club: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Other people who could help us and how they might help: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Questions to ask University Outreach and Extension staff and other leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

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full week in October. Counties and clubs may use this week to promote 4-H in their areas. Promotional literature regarding National 4-H Week is distributed to the counties.

### ***Citizenship Washington Focus***

4-H members, ages 15 to 19, have the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. for one week during the summer. They stay at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland while

participating in citizenship programs and touring the city.

### ***National 4-H Youth Congress***

National 4-H Youth Congress is a conference for state award winners. It recognizes the nation's outstanding 4-H youths in project work and 4-H leadership and achievement and provides them with continued educational development through tours, educational seminars and meetings with motivational speakers.

### ***National 4-H Conference***

National 4-H Conference, held at the National 4-H Center, is usually attended by teen members of the state 4-H advisory council and their coordinators. During this conference, delegates have the opportunity to assist with and influence future 4-H programming.

### ***International opportunities***

The current mission of the 4-H International Program is to

further cross-cultural understanding and international development through the study and exchange of human and technical resources. 4-H members and their families have many opportunities for cross-cultural experiences.

4-H families can host international exchanges involved with youth groups similar to 4-H in countries throughout the world. 4-H members can also travel to others countries for varying lengths of time. Contact the state 4-H office for more information.

As you can see, there are many activities for your 4-H members to choose from. Encourage your members to participate in as many activities as possible. The more they participate, the more they will gain from their 4-H experience.

**Good luck!!**

Missouri 4-H recognizes the importance of good character in everything that is done. 4-H staff and volunteers, as well as 4-H members and their families, know that a person of character:

- is a good person, someone to look up to and admire
- knows the difference between right and wrong and always tries to do what is right
- sets a good example
- makes the world a better place
- lives according to the Six Pillars of Character — Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship.

*Adapted from Dodd, M.A., Hoglum, L., and Robinson, M. (1998). Letters to New 4-H Leaders. Oregon State University Cooperative Extension Service, Corvallis, Ore.*

