So You Have Been Asked to Be a 4-H Project Leader

There are three steps to becoming a 4-H Project Leader:
1. Understand what a project leader does and agree to the task.
2. Complete a 4-H Volunteer Application Form and undergo screening.
3. Complete a one-time volunteer orientation workshop (can be done in-person or on-line).

This informational sheet is to help you understand all three stages. Additional information can be obtained by calling the Franklin County University of Missouri Extension Office at 636-583-5141, or by visiting the Missouri 4-H Website: www.mo4h.missouri.edu

1. What is expected of a project leader?

4-H project leaders are expected to conduct at least 6 hours of meeting time to provide opportunities for 4-H members to learn new skills and information about the project. This is done by teaching the information to the members, by finding others who can teach the skills or information, or a combination of both. Leaders can use a combination of their own knowledge, knowledge of others, and the 4-H project literature. Most of the project literature includes several activities to help teach project skills and information. The activities are designed with clear instructions that anyone can follow. Project leaders will have to purchase the literature, or ask the club to purchase them. The cost to purchase the literature for each project will be about $16.00 to $20.00 (includes three units of member manuals and one leader manual).

Expenses for supplies and materials for the project are the responsibility of the families. Project Leaders should give the families some idea of what the cost will be early in the project. Some volunteers choose only to charge the families for expensive supplies, while others charge for all supplies.

Project Leaders consider their own time, and the schedules of the members in setting up project meeting dates and times. It is ideal to find a time that meets everyone’s needs, but because everyone has very busy schedules, the project leader sets the time and date of the meetings for when most families can participate. Project Leaders also determine where the project group will meet. Often project meetings are held at the home of the project leader.

Project leaders also must keep some simple records about the meetings. The records include which members participated, and what was taught at the meeting. This is kept on a simple form that is returned to the 4-H Club Leader in September.

2. Complete a Missouri 4-H Volunteer Application Form and Undergo Screening.

The application form is simple and straightforward. The person who asked you to be a project leader will be able to provide you with a form. Because volunteers may be working with children from other families, all volunteers must be screened for child abuse, neglect, and criminal records. Once you return the Volunteer Application, screening will take place without any further work on your part. When screening is complete you will receive a postcard telling you that you can begin working with 4-H members. Volunteers must complete an application form and be screened each year. There is no cost to volunteers for this process.

Prepared by Dave Hileman, University of Missouri Extension 4-H Youth Specialist
3. Complete a One-time Volunteer Orientation

Missouri 4-H is in the business of positive youth development. The “Making the Best Better 4-H Volunteer Orientation” is designed to help all 4-H volunteers understand the history, philosophy, and methods that lead to positive youth development. As a new volunteer you will have up to 6 months to complete the orientation. At least two face to face orientation opportunities will be available in Franklin County from June to December, and two more from January to May. We encourage the face to face orientation, but volunteers can also take the orientation on-line at any time. This is a one-time requirement. Volunteers do not need to repeat the orientation each year.

Additional Help for 4-H Volunteers

A one-hour basic Project Leader training will be held each January to help project leaders with additional resources and teaching methods. In addition volunteers can contact county 4-H staff at the Franklin County University of Missouri Extension office at any time for additional information.

The Missouri 4-H website (see front) also has a lot of information to help project leaders.

When on the site be sure to check out “Projects” tab for information about each project and click on the heart to learn about additional resources for volunteers.

Volunteer Recognition

4-H Clubs often recognize project leaders at the club level. All Franklin County 4-H Volunteers are also recognized for their years of service at the Franklin County 4-H Volunteer Recognition Dinner each January in Union, Mo. However, most volunteers find that their greatest reward comes from working with their project members and watching them grow in confidence as they gain new skills and knowledge, and get the added important benefit of having another caring adult in their lives.

Updated 10-27-09