

## 4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

# Recruiting Volunteers for Your Club

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Volunteers are important members of the 4-H team. Without volunteers, 4-H would be unable to offer the programs, activities, clubs and other learning experiences to young people that 4-H now offers.

Volunteers permit a county 4-H program to offer a wider variety of educational programs to a greater number of young people with a higher degree of adult attention for each child than would be possible from an agent-led program. Applying this same idea to your work at the club level, you can expand the types of programs offered, reach more young people and provide more individual attention by increasing the involvement of others in support of your club.

This fact sheet is designed to aid you in recruiting volunteers to support your 4-H club. The same ideas can be applied to recruiting volunteers for assistance with county-wide programs on which you might be working.

### What Can Other Volunteers Do?

As a volunteer you are probably aware that there are many types of jobs for volunteers to perform in 4-H. Think for a moment of what volunteer jobs someone might do to improve the learning that members receive from your club. Some jobs that you may have thought of are to:

- Conduct a program at one or more club meetings.

- Teach short-term workshops of interest to club members.
- Serve as a club project leader, working in many ways to supplement the learning of members enrolled in a particular project.
- Serve on planning committees.
- Provide transportation.
- Arrange for tours or field trips.
- Assist one or a small group of members with their project or demonstration work.
- Coach a judging team.
- Serve as an organizational leader of a new club if your club is too large to accept new members.
- Help organize special events and activities (club picnic, clean-up drive or others).
- Act as judge for 4-H events.

You can see from this partial list that there are many ways that involving other volunteers can improve your club's program and lighten the load on you. You could probably think of many other jobs to add to this list. If there are all of these jobs to do, who can you get to do them?

### How Do You Identify Volunteers?

Before identifying potential volunteers, you will need to know:

- Why volunteers are needed.
- What will be expected of the volunteer.



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- What skills the volunteer needs.
- What help will be available to the volunteer.
- How long the volunteer needs to serve.

You should develop a job description containing this information. These job descriptions need not be elaborate. Much more information would need to be provided to someone being recruited as an organizational leader than to someone being recruited to be a resource person for only one club meeting.

Now that you know what is expected of the volunteer you seek, you will have an idea of the type person you need.

4-H volunteers can be found in nearly every community. They come in all sizes, shapes, colors, ages and income levels and have many different interests, skills and backgrounds.

Once you have a specific job to fill, you should use every possible means of identifying potential volunteers. Some approaches you might consider include the following:

- Use yourself as a resource. List people with whom you are familiar that have skills and interests related to the job.
- A key way to identify volunteers is to ask others for recommendations. Parents, members, other volunteer leaders and key community leaders are good sources of leads for identifying volunteers.
- Search for groups with skills and interests related to the job and approach their members.
- Keep your eyes open for clues. Note news stories about people with an interest in youth development or the subject that is related to the job. A notebook or card file of community members and their interests as demonstrated through participation in various aspects of community affairs can be an asset.
- Don't forget that the parents of your members would be a good source of potential volunteers.

## Tips for Recruiting

Once volunteer prospects have been identified, the next step is the actual recruiting. You should

approach your potential volunteer confident that the job you have in mind is a worthy one and one that the potential volunteer is capable of doing.

One of the first things the prospect will want to know is what you want done and when. With your job description in hand (or at least in mind), you should have no problem providing this information.

You should also be prepared to discuss the benefits volunteering will have for the volunteer, the community and the young people served. For example, benefits to the volunteer may include:

- A chance to learn or improve skills (such as in working with groups, planning, teaching or others).
- Opportunities to meet and work with other volunteers who share similar interests.
- An opportunity to promote hobbies or other topics of interest to the volunteer.
- An opportunity to really contribute to youth development (especially important when parents are the potential recruits).
- It can be fun.

The major assets of a community are its people. These assets can be enhanced by "people" development programs such as 4-H.

Young people benefit in countless ways from the involvement of adult volunteers. Among these are the opportunity to:

- Learn a skill.
- Gain knowledge of a subject.
- Develop positive attitudes about a subject and learning in general.
- Learn to work with others.
- Learn how to learn.

Go about your task of recruiting with a positive approach. Have the attitude that you are offering the potential recruit an opportunity. Know what needs to be done and why the prospect is the person for the job. You may be surprised by your effectiveness.

Your enthusiasm as a volunteer is contagious. Start an epidemic.

Reprinted for use in Arkansas from material prepared by John A. Rutledge, Jr., Extension 4-H Youth Specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida.

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