

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

The National 4-H Recognition Model

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Why Recognition?

Recognition is not a separate, unrelated part of 4-H. It should be an integral part of all 4-H educational experiences. The National 4-H Recognition Model provides a framework for meeting the challenge of recognizing young people in 4-H. Because we work with a variety of young people in many different learning situations, we cannot expect one type of recognition to work in all situations.

4. **Peer Competition** – High risk, makes competition optional, can confuse means and ends, needs rules and procedure, may generate publicity and is not for children under the age of nine.
5. **Excellence in Cooperation** – Uses mutually agreed upon goals, gives attention to way group works, ultimate goal is not recognition and recognizes all. (Club Community Service Award)

The Model

The National 4-H Recognition Model uses five approaches:

1. **Participation** – Simple requirements, well publicized, can be earned many times, is presented at the activity, is appropriate for activity and 4-H'er, and need not be expensive but is valued by the 4-H'er.
2. **Progress Toward Self-Set Goals** – For all ages and activities, realistic and reachable, uses 4-H'er's own goals and plans, evaluated by 4-H'er and adults, and is measured against goals.
3. **Achievement of Standards** – Established by specialists, clearly defined and not changed, uses rating categories (Blue, Red, White) and measures quality. The Teen Star Award is one example.

Beliefs About Recognition

4-H subscribes to some basic beliefs that make recognition an educational tool for developing life skills. These are:

- Meets basic human need.
- Builds positive self-esteem.
- Balances extrinsic (tangible) and intrinsic (intangible).
- Part of all 4-H experiences.
- Appropriate recognition takes many forms.
- Requires adult support.
- All 4-H'ers need to be recognized at some time.
- Presented soon after earned and in front of significant others.



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- Appropriate recognition for individual 4-H'ers varies with their stage of development, past experiences, family lifestyle, community and cultural heritage.
- Includes self-assessment and reflection.
- Gives choices to 4-H'ers in learning and participation.
- Balance is needed among all element of the model for 4-H programs at all levels.
- Select awards appropriate for the age of your members. The award should be something that age group values. For example, 9- to 11-year-olds like to collect things, so ribbons, buttons, etc., are valued. Teens appreciate things they can use – cash, sweatshirts, etc.
- Select awards related to the learning experience; remember, they do not need to be expensive.
- Use the 4-H name and emblem, whenever possible. The use of the 4-H group's name or county name is always appropriate. Using the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension logo will add prestige to the award.

Making it Work

As a 4-H volunteer, your challenge is to help young people become self-directed, productive and contributing citizens. Recognition is one of the ways you can achieve this goal. Although we regularly use recognition, we need to continually review our efforts to see if we are at our desired goals.

Selection of Awards

When you select awards, here are some ideas to consider:

- Select awards that are distinctive and show good design principles.
- Avoid using the same award repeatedly for the same program or different program.
- Remember, news media reports (newspaper, radio, etc.) enhance any award.

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