

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

Keeping Teens in 4-H

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Many clubs have a problem keeping teenage 4-H members. There are many reasons for this difficulty, and the biggest reason is probably "competition for time." Teenage boys and girls are involved in many activities at school; they are probably learning to drive and beginning to date more. They may also have to work at home, or they may even have a part-time job. Then, of course, there is homework. As you see, teenagers have a lot of ways to spend their time, and 4-H work could be one way if the program is made relative to teenagers.

Senior 4-H members are not going to be satisfied just to attend a monthly meeting and work on their 4-H projects. They want and need a challenge. They need activities that will give them a chance to develop adult qualities of leadership, citizenship and community service.

Teenagers want responsibility as well as a chance to do their own thing. 4-H could give them this opportunity in three general areas.

Ways to Involve Senior 4-H Members

1. Use them to promote 4-H.
2. Give them leadership responsibilities.
3. Develop projects that are relevant to their wants and needs.

Promoting 4-H as 4-H Ambassadors

Use senior 4-H members to present programs to civic clubs, Extension homemakers clubs, school

assemblies, church groups, fair boards, community organizations, 4-H Foundation meetings, etc. Form a "4-H Speakers Bureau" to carry out this task.

Use senior 4-H members on the radio, have them write newspaper articles or appear on television in behalf of 4-H. Form a 4-H Journalism Group to write the club newsletter.

Senior 4-H members can be given the responsibility of developing ideas to support 4-H. Examples would be skits, puppet or muppet shows, speeches, slide-tape presentations, etc.

Some ways senior 4-H members might be used to promote 4-H are:

1. Design an interesting 4-H bulletin and distribute it in grocery sacks, bank statements, telephone bills, Welcome Wagon packets or any item that goes out to the public.
2. Welcome Wagon – A senior 4-H group could be organized with the specific purpose of visiting new families in their community, telling them about 4-H and inviting them to a 4-H meeting.
3. A booth at the county fair operated by senior 4-H members who would hand out information or possibly have a slide presentation on 4-H.
4. Develop a 4-H cartoon series for local newspapers.

These are just a few ideas. Now put on your thinking cap and come up with some more that will fit your situation.



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Teen Leadership

1. Delegate responsibility to 4-H members during National 4-H Week, at the 4-H club recognition program, and at county and club activities.
2. Assist younger 4-H members in areas such as demonstrations, office training, record keeping and 4-H club program planning.
3. Give senior 4-H members the responsibility of helping other members in their club with projects.
4. Encourage participation in state and national 4-H activities such as Teen Leader Conference, Citizenship . . . Washington Focus, interstate and possibly international exchange trips.
5. Conduct leadership courses and retreats for senior 4-H members. In other words, train them to teach others.
6. Encourage senior members to participate in the County 4-H Teen Leader Club if one exists.
7. Delegate some of the adult leaders' responsibilities to older 4-H members within the club.

Projects Relative to Teenage 4-H Members

1. Career Exploration
2. Decision Making as It Relates to Cigarette Smoking and the Use of Alcohol
3. International Understanding
4. Drug Use and Misuse
5. A Job as a Baby-Sitter
6. Voting at 18
7. Learning to Dance
8. The Road to Physical Fitness
9. Public Speaking
10. Performing Arts
11. Clowning
12. Backpacking
13. Who Am I?
14. Being a Leader
15. Community Involvement and Me

Suggestions for Working With Teens

Adults who have worked with teens give these suggestions:

Treat teens as adults and they respond as adults. Teens are responsible and able to lead when given the opportunity. It is particularly important that adults do not give responsibility and then take it back. Teens must have the chance to follow through.

Be sincere in working with teens.

Be aware of the personalities and needs of each person as well as the needs of the group. A balance that allows both the individual and the group to work to capacity must be reached.

Work with the teens to set realistic expectations. Teens will learn their own capabilities and when to ask for help. Once the expectations are set, provide guidance and support to help teens fulfill them.

Teens actively involved in leadership roles say that they most like to work with adults who:

- Involve teens in all levels of the program, including planning.
- Don't expect teens to simply carry out the plans of adults.
- Realize that there is more than one way of doing things and let teens explore many ways.
- Listen to teens.
- Are patient and trusting.
- Get to know teens as people.
- Ask instead of tell.

The challenges involving teens in leadership are great; so are the rewards. As a leader developing leaders, you are building the core leaders of the communities of the future.

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