

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

4-H Awards Programs and Banquets

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If you will keep in mind that the primary purpose of an awards program is to recognize the achievements of 4-H'ers, you will be well on the way toward success and effectiveness. You should give "VIP" treatment to each young person. There may be other items essential to the program success (introductions of guests and donors, recognition of friends of 4-H and parents, announcements and speeches), but these should be secondary to the recognition of the 4-H'er.

Special guests and donors could be honored without taking the spotlight away from 4-H'ers by involving them in presentation of pins, certificates and other awards.

Having adults give the recognition of 4-H'ers is very effective and appropriate. Volunteer leaders, Extension agents, state legislators, county officials, donors, county school superintendent, principals or other involved adults can make these presentations even more special.

Recognition Is the Key

Appropriate recognition is a tremendous motivation. There are many opportunities for recognition in 4-H. A popular means is the club 4-H awards program or banquet.

This program guide is to help you develop or improve recognition efforts in your club.

Program Pointers

It is important that your 4-H officers run the show. The program should be theirs. It is an excellent leadership opportunity for them and also an excellent teaching opportunity for you. You serve as advisor in planning the program with the 4-H'ers.

Some other dos and don'ts:

- Seat 4-H'ers by key guests throughout the audience.
- 4-H'ers are guests and should not pay.
- Parents should be invited, preferably as guests; if guest status is not possible, try for partial payment for the parents.
- In introducing people for special recognition, make sure you can accurately pronounce their names. The recognition has a "phony ring" if you cannot say the name. Also devise some kind of checking system to be sure that the person being recognized is in the



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audience. It “devalues” the recognition if you call several names of people who are not there, and it says very little for your organizational ability.

- Pictures taken of those special honored 4-H'ers are most meaningful. Make arrangements for extra copies, and see that the appropriate person receives his own personal copy. Newspaper, radio and television coverage before and after the program is most appropriate. People like to associate with positive things that make news.

Get Off to a Good Start

Invitations

Invitations to 4-H'ers should be sent out far enough in advance so that arrangements can be made to attend. The invitation should have a personal appearance, be attractive and have style and class. The quality of the invitation often is directly related to the quality of the program.

Guests

The guest list should include:

- Local newspaper editor, radio/television personnel. Spouses should also be invited.
- Local donors
- School and county officials
- Legislators and community dignitaries (Surprise special guests and ask them what time a car can pick them up.)

Location

Location of the program is very important. The image of the physical facility has a direct effect on the program. The new vocational school is quite a contrast to the oldest grade school (basement to boot). Strive for the best physical facility available to you.

The audience should be able to recognize that the event is a 4-H program.

4-H emblems, flags, signs and 4-H colors (green and white) appropriately displayed are a must.

4-H placemats, napkins and table favors add to a program.

Being able to see and hear is vital to the success of the program. Check out the acoustics, sound system and seating arrangements.

Printed Program

The printed program should be attractive and designed as a possible souvenir. People like to see their names in print. Listing names of 4-H'ers is appropriate. Also include some current statistics and history of the 4-H program with an emphasis on your club program. 4-H'ers like to be associated with something that is progressive and dynamic. Be sure that the program is easily recognized as a 4-H program, and involve your 4-H'ers in the design of the program if possible.

Organization Makes the Difference

The presentation process of pins and certificates needs to be organized. Much time can be wasted that detracts from the program if individuals “parade” from the audience to the speaker’s stand, especially if 4-H'ers are seated at the very back of the room. Some planning ahead will prevent delays and will also prevent empty seats at the front. The location of guests is also important. Mix them with some of your good, older 4-H'ers if possible.

Registration of participants before the program can be done by 4-H'ers. This would help you to know what 4-H'ers and guests are absent and prevent the embarrassment of calling names of absent participants.

Details Make the Difference

Other helpful hints:

Give younger 4-H'ers a role to play and have a representation of young 4-H'ers at the head table.

Two hours is probably the upper limit of patience of adults and 4-H'ers alike. Start and stop at the designated times.

Provide 4-H'ers with names and addresses of local, state and national donors and encourage thank-you notes.

Table fun-mixers are appropriate. There are many interesting quizzes, puzzles and paper games. Name tags will help everyone to become better acquainted.

Table decorations and a speaker's table centerpiece add color and festivity. Plan for an appropriate presentation of the centerpiece to a deserving individual at the conclusion of the program.

The program should vary in format from year to year so that the "same old thing" criticism is not justifiable. If a speaker is part of the program, select someone who will focus on the theme or areas of emphasis.

All 4-H club leadership team members should attend, ideally have a meaningful part in the program and should be appropriately recognized in front of the group.

Sponsorship

Award programs can be very effective. Banquets are not mandatory. If a banquet is not possible, a potluck dinner would be an option. Another idea would be a recognition program with refreshments. Make the activity as nice as possible with the resources you have available.

Finally

Success breeds success. A satisfied customer tells three others; a dissatisfied customer tells thirteen others. Quality programs will assure participation.

This material was adapted for use in Arkansas from materials developed by Dr. Thomas F. Rodger, Assistant Director, 4-H and Youth, Georgia, and Fred Buny, State 4-H Specialist, Ohio.

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