

## **Behind the Scenes- Gearing Up for a 4-H Event**

By Kathleen Jablonski, 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator

February, time for skiing, ice fishing, snowshoeing...and making plans for all the 4-H spring events. What happens in a 4-H club in the winter?

Out around the County, 4-H leaders are meeting with their kids to complete a wide variety of projects including Ec-Co-Action, Palette of Fun, donkey care and management, equine science, arts and crafts, and community service to name a few. There might be a group doing rocketry, shooting sports or sewing Fashion Revue garments. Folks involved in an animal science project, who wish to exhibit at fairs, are busy completing lease agreements as they begin working with their project animals prior to the April 1<sup>st</sup> paperwork deadline.

What goes into a project? First of all, all 4-H leaders go through a screening process: an application, reference check, face to face interview and an orientation program. Then we have project specific training. There are meetings held in the county, region and state to train leaders in a wide variety of subjects.

Once the screening process has been completed, leaders organize meetings in conjunction with the club's organizational leader. Project meetings total at least 6 hours in length over a period of time. Some meet for longer periods of time, depending on the project area. Leaders share their knowledge with the 4-H'ers, learn right along with them, or, provide mentoring for a 4-H'er who is sharing their knowledge with other club members.

If there is a county event that relates to the project, the project leaders will coach the kids to get ready for an event. For example, on March 6, we are holding our County Activities Day, which is open to all 4-H youth around the County. For the next few weeks, leaders and parents will be working with their 4-H'ers from many project areas to get their demonstrations and action exhibits ready to present to a panel of judges. 4-H'ers will earn ribbons according to the Danish system of judging.

A demonstration, you say? Well, it's not like Rachel Ray or Martha Stewart with their team of professional stylists and videographers. Each 4-H'er picks a topic. They prepare the posters, the script and the information that will be used in their demonstration. They can choose to work alone, or work as a team. If they work as a team, all partners must do equal amounts of work. A 4-H'er must gather the tools and materials they will need to do the demonstration. Their demonstration should have a strong introduction, a well rehearsed sequence of steps that are demonstrated, and a solid conclusion and summary. The 4-H'er's appearance and manners are part of the judge's scoring to decide their Danish ribbon. On top of that, the 4-H'er has to stay within a time frame based on their age (older youth are expected to present a longer demonstration). At the end of the presentation, 4-H'ers are expected to field questions from the judges and the audience.

An action exhibit is a bit different. Some folks call it a "continuing demonstration", but it really isn't. It is a continuous, interactive exhibit of a project. It can be laid out in steps, or be a quiz format or a continuous conversation about the selected topic, the difference being it's purpose is to engage and instruct the audience as they visit the exhibit. The 4-H'er or 4-H team, like the youth presenting a demonstration, has to create the environment for the action exhibit: the backdrop or table setting, the posters, the sequential steps, the informational handouts and the content of what will be shared. 4-H'ers rehearse what they will say to the public. They must have enough "verbage" and supplies to do the action

exhibit for 45 minutes to one hour. Action exhibits are judged on the Danish System of judging using a score sheet developed for use across the state.

County Activities Day is an event that feeds into state and regional events. Our youth who are ages 12 and over members have an opportunity to qualify to attend State Activities Day, and if they make the grade, they may receive an invitation to represent New Hampshire at the New England Center at Eastern States Exposition in Springfield, Massachusetts. 4-H'ers are strongly encouraged to bring their demonstrations and action exhibits to the North Haverhill Fair to show the public what they have learned and what youth can do for public presentations.

Our 4-H leaders and parents do a lot to prepare 4-H members for a lifetime of public presentations, community service and self sufficiency by teaching life skills. It's just one small part of the 4-H program and the 4-H year.

For more information about the 4-H program in Grafton County, please contact the UNHCE office at 3855 Dartmouth College Hwy, Box 5, N. Haverhill, NH 03774 or e-mail: [Kathleen.Jablonski@unh.edu](mailto:Kathleen.Jablonski@unh.edu).

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