



Developing the Whole Child - Your Task as a 4-H Horse Leader

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As you embark upon your job as a 4-H Horse Leader, it's important to keep in mind a few items. The first is to remember that your main purpose is to build life skills that make your members productive and effective citizens of tomorrow.

While your common interest with your members may be horses, the horse project is a vehicle for building these life skills. As you plan your meetings and activities, remember what life skills are needed for members to experience success and how you can help members develop these skills.

Second, remember that individuals learn differently. Consider how you might teach topics in different ways to insure that each member has an equal chance to master that topic.

The third thing to consider is the 4-H Method – **Learn by Doing**. Members learn best when they do things for themselves. This means trying things for the first time as well as making mistakes and learning from them.

Let parents know you're always there to keep their children safe and to encourage them when needed, but doing it themselves rather than having someone do it for them is what 4-H is about. This includes learning at the club level as well as participation in events and competitions in which their children may be involved.

Fourth, think about how to encourage balance in your members' involvement in activities. 4-H has a variety of opportunities for members, from events that encourage group cooperation, to social and educational activities and competitions.

Encourage your members to participate in the variety of opportunities 4-H offers. Don't let your members fall into the "competitions are everything" mode. By not sampling other activities 4-H offers, members can miss a number of personal experiences that could have some very positive influences on their development.

Don't be afraid to ask a member to reconsider his or her membership if showing is the only reason for belonging. If you need to, point out the objectives of the program and the expectations of membership.

A fifth hint is that life skills really are the beginnings of leadership skills. Build in leadership roles in your club program whether it's committees for things as simple as refreshments at meetings or as complicated as planning a club show.

Whenever possible, encourage members who have a skill to be the ones to introduce that skill to younger members. With the opportunity to practice leadership skills within these roles, members develop leadership that lasts throughout their lives.

Last, but not least, is FUN. 4-H should be fun for all. Watch for signs that members are enjoying what they are doing. Design similar experiences for future meetings.

You also need to look for signs that members aren't enjoying what they are doing. Try to pinpoint the problem. Often a few simple things can change what was an unenjoyable activity into one all enjoy.

While your job as a 4-H leader is a challenging one, it's also rewarding.

Helping a timid child blossom into a confident participant, an enthusiastic member become focused and reach for that long-held goal and that tiny 8-year-old grow into a capable teen leader, are experiences that are priceless.

4-H values the time and commitment you offer to the program and salutes your willingness to help shape our leaders of tomorrow.

Leader References Available from Your 4-H Extension Educator

NH 4-H Leaders Handbook - Excellent reference including information on managing your club, youth development stages, parent involvement and other areas that will help you with your role as leader.

4-H CCS Horse Curriculum - Five print level books with interactive, on-line support materials. Newly revised in 2004. <http://4hccsprojects.com/horse>

Rules and Classes for NH 4-H Horse Shows - A manual with the rules that pertain to the NH 4-H Horse Show program. It's updated every three years by the State 4-H Horse Advisory Council.

Fact Sheets & Project Manuals - A variety of fact sheets have been developed by the State Horse Curriculum Committee on topics that are helpful to members and/or leaders in the horse project. There are also project manuals and project records available for members and leaders. Check with your Extension Educator to find out what is available.

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