



## Parent Involvement in 4-H Youth Development A Guide for Leaders

**4-H is a family affair, or it should be.** This means that parents of your 4-H members should be an important part of your program. Parental involvement is one of the keys to a successful 4-H club. It provides an ongoing base for club support and expands the potential for interesting and exciting 4-H club programs. Active parents mean active members:

**Favorable Attitudes** + **Parent Interests** + **Active Parent Cooperation** = **Successful 4-H Clubs**

### Why Should Parents Participate in 4-H?

Parent participation in 4-H results in the following benefits:

- 4-H is a family affair, offering many opportunities where both child and parent participate in common interest; strengthening family ties.
- Active parent participation can strengthen and broaden the 4-H program in any local club or in any county.
- When parental support is positive, the club is likely to become stronger, larger, and more active.
- In clubs where parental support is evident, individual members receive more personal attention and guidance from leaders and parents.
- Club activities and events will develop and expand with the additional support of parents. 4-H can have a positive influence on the lives of thousands of boys and girls. This happens only when parents care enough to share their time, efforts, and talents.

### Ideas to Help Inform and Interest Parents and Gain Their Cooperation:

- Involve members and parents in setting goals and planning your club's programs each year.
- Become familiar with the interests and special talents of your members' parents. Ask for advice in areas where they can contribute, then make good use of good ideas. Be specific with requests.
- When parents volunteer to help, make sure they are involved in something worthwhile. Make a mental note of their offer and return their call within a few days with some specific task in which they can help.
- Involve parents in sharing leadership as project leaders. Emphasize that they can teach a skill or project that may require only a few 4-H meetings for the entire year.
- Keep parents informed. Help them understand the 4-H objectives. Send notes and letters about the 4-H club program directly to parents.

- Invite parents to club meetings. This is especially important if you don't meet in homes. Hold a club meeting for parents where 4-H members present the program, using presentations, judging, or exhibits.
- Let parents know what is expected from their child, and your interest in their child. Show parents that you are interested in their child by phone calls, letters, home visits, and discussions before and after club meetings.
- Recognize both members and their parents. Thank parents for their support both personally and in public. Compliment parents for their contributions to the club program.
- Maintain parent interest. Arrange a special social event with parents. Ask county 4-H staff to attend a parent-night program. Introduce parents to the 4-H staff so they can become better acquainted.
- Encourage members to make their 4-H work a topic of family conversation.
- Solicit parent involvement at the 4-H fair and other activities and events where results of 4-H club work is shown.

#### References:

Smith, Carolyn A., New York State 4-H Club Management, A Resource Guide, Cornell Cooperative Extension, November 1982

*Parents - Partners on the 4-H Team* (tape-slide program), Cooperative Extension Service, Ohio State University.

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