



# 4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

Nebraska 4-H Youth Development

## Making 4-H the Priority for Busy Kids & Parents

In today's busy society, it's often difficult for families to make 4-H a priority. Finding a time or date for your club to meet can be a struggle in itself. The following tips will help you, your club members and parents make 4-H a top priority:

**Plan ahead.** To plan a meeting at the last minute is a recipe for low or no participation. Utilize a club calendar and get the dates on the calendar early. Families will plan around dates/meetings already scheduled. Early dates will help make 4-H the top priority when new commitments arise. Remember to communicate regularly with families by phone, email, or text messages to keep 4-H members informed of meetings, events and their commitment.

**Be realistic.** Be realistic about the time allotment that families have available for 4-H. Lower your expectations for the number of meetings you hold or projects for members so they can stay involved. Consider that youth may be able to complete some project work at home when their schedule is open instead of planning for the project to be completed as a group.

**Be focused.** Help families and club members be realistic about what they can accomplish during the 4-H year. Suggest reducing the number of projects to a reasonable level or select one project area and excel in that area. When there are too many projects or expectations about exhibits, it's not fun anymore- it's work!

**Set clear expectations.** What do you expect from club members and parents? What do they expect from you? Communicate regularly with 4-H families and establish expectations. Consider creating a 4-H club contract. Have club members discuss what they expect from each other during meetings. For example, a horse club contract might include: "Treat your horses and others with respect. Be on time for 4-H group activities. No cell phones used while riding." The key to a 4-H club contract is youth input. 4-H members create the terms and agree to them as a group. Incorporate incentives/rewards related to the contract. Give stars or prizes!

**Keep 4-H fun while getting youth input.** Keep things positive and fun for youth and seek their input. They will want to attend meetings and hang out with their 4-H friends if these elements are included. Have contests to encourage participation and to pique their interest. For example: "Email five ideas to the club leader, receive a prize at our next meeting!" Incorporating fun and utilizing youth input will keep 4-H a top priority.

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Scholtz, D., (2013) University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension 4-H Youth Development.  
Ideas/resources: Hall County 4-H Club Leaders, Nebraska 4-H.