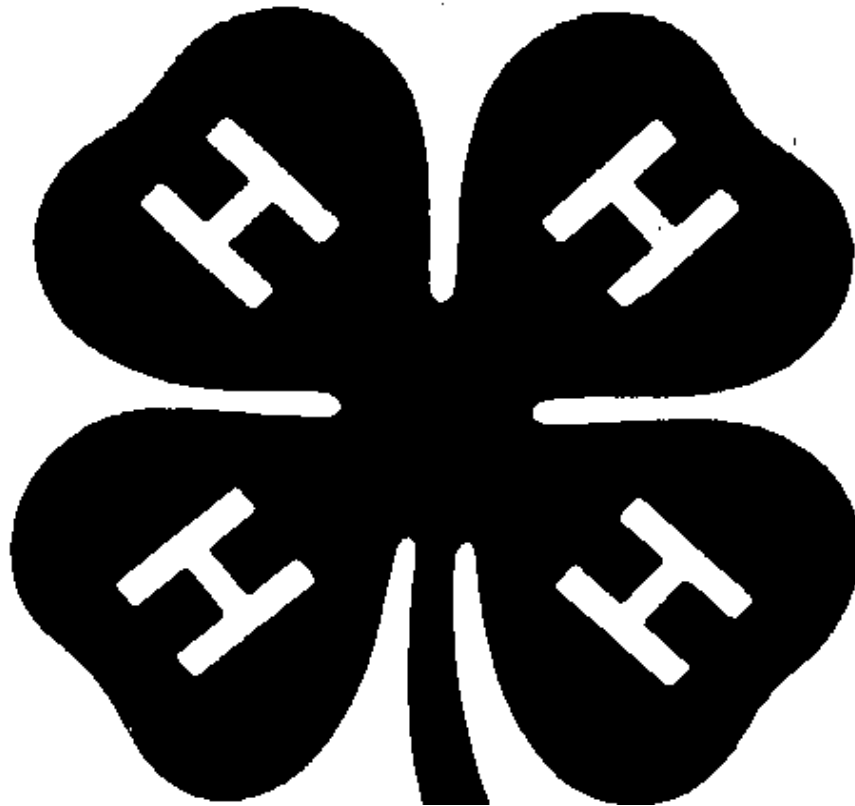




Author:
Kathryn J. Cox, Ph.D.
Extension 4-H Specialist, Youth Development
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Introduction and Purpose

***I pledge
my head to clearer thinking,
my heart to greater loyalty,
my hands to larger service, and
my health to better living
for my club, my community, my country, and my world.***

4-H service activities are an important part of every member's 4-H experience. As the 4-H Pledge conveys, each member is expected to commit him/herself as a good citizen for the betterment of others. 4-H service activities are effective means by which this is accomplished.

Every 4-H member should plan to devote about 25% of his or her 4-H work to citizenship development and service activities. Each 4-H group is expected to complete at least one service activity each year, and make sure their total program reflects a fairly equal balance of educational, service, and social programs.

The purpose of this session is to assist adult and teen leaders in working with 4-H'ers to plan effective service activities. Effective 4-H service activities are ones which meet important needs, which are well received and supported by those served, and which provide for member ownership, pride, and growth.

“Knee to Knee”

Participant Idea Sharing and Stage-Setting

One of the most important things that can happen in 4-H volunteer conferences is for participants to get acquainted with others who have similar goals and interests and to share ideas and suggestions with them. Bill Henderson’s “Knee To Knee” activity is a good way to start. The activity proceeds as follows:

- form two lines (facing each other), then shake hands and introduce yourself to your first “partner” who is directly across from you in the other line.
- after the facilitator asks each question, each set of partners should discuss your answers to the question in approximately one minute
- when both partners have had a chance to respond, everyone moves one space to your left to discuss the next question. (The people at the end of the line move to the space across from them in the other line, so that the entire group moves one space clockwise. After each move, everyone should have as a new partner the person who was two spaces away in the opposite line for the previous question.)

Sample Questions:

- Do you think it is important for youth to be involved in community service projects? Why or why not?
- Should community service be an important part of a youth’s 4-H experience? Why or why not?
- In what ways are today’s youth similar to and different from the way your generation was at that age?
- What do you most enjoy and least enjoy about working with teens? Younger kids?
- Do you have as many teens involved in your 4-H program as you would like? Why or why not?
- Why do youth drop out and why do youth continue to be involved in 4-H?
- What are the most interesting, fun, and/or successful community service activities you have observed?
- What are some of your ideas for how teens can help enhance community service projects in your program?
- What improvements are needed in how volunteers, teens, and younger youth in your 4-H community service programs work together?
- If a new 4-H volunteer asked you for advice for planning, conducting, and evaluating community service activities with his or her group, what would you say? What are some tips for things to do and things to avoid that you might share?

Why Do Youth Continue or Discontinue? What Research Suggests

The following reasons are listed in the order of their frequency of being cited in nearly a dozen articles which appeared in the Journal of Extension over the past ten years related to why youth continue and discontinue involvement in 4-H.

Why Youth Drop Out of 4-H

1. Displeasure with 4-H clubs/groups
 - ... boring meetings
 - ... poorly planned meetings; meetings aren't "worth the time they take to go"
 - ... few opportunities for youth; "leaders' club" rather than "members' club"
2. Displeasure with 4-H advisors and staff
 - ... leaders don't give enough help with projects
 - ... leaders not prepared for meetings
 - ... leaders not doing enough
 - ... adults not allowing youth to do enough
 - ... adults not listening to youth
 - ... adults not understanding teens
3. Too busy with sports
4. Too busy with a job
5. Dissatisfaction with projects

Why Youth Continue Involvement In 4-H

1. High quality 4-H Club meetings
2. High levels of member responsibility
3. High personal commitment
4. Positive parental involvement and support
5. Positive experiences with competition
6. Participation in club, county, state, national activities
7. Like being part of a group
8. Guidance and support from adult leaders and staff
9. Program expectations and content adjust to meet needs and interests of youth as they get older

Discussion: *What does this mean for your 4-H group and your 4-H community service projects?*

How To Get Started

People support what they help to create. All members should be involved in planning and conducting the 4-H service activities your group chooses to do. In addition, those to whom the service activities are directed must be involved as well.

There are several decisions 4-H groups must make in planning 4-H service activities. First, the 4-H group must decide what's **needed**. Secondly, they must determine what **should be done** to meet the need(s) identified. Next, the group must decide what **they can do** to bring this about, or at least make things better than they are now. Finally, the group needs to decide exactly what **they will do**, and who will do what. Once these decisions have been made, the group can begin planning the details.

Step 1: Deciding What's Needed

The first step in planning a 4-H service activity is to decide what's needed. Survey your community needs and keep up on current events. A good way to decide what's needed is to involve 4-Hers in brainstorming or using other decision-making techniques to figure out what the alternatives are. The "4-H Service Activity Ideas" section of this guide lists ideas to consider along with the ones 4-Hers identify.

Step 2: Deciding What Should Be Done

To decide what should be done, look at the list of all the things that are needed, and decide together the highest priorities for your community. The group should also figure out what other people are affected by the problems and issues you've identified, and consider their values, needs, and interests in deciding what the group should do.

Step 3: Deciding What The 4-H Group Can Do

Next the 4-H group will probably have to narrow the focus of your service activity. For example, if your group decides that what needs to be done most in your community is to get rid of the drug dealers and marijuana growers, it's likely that you won't be able to get the job done by yourselves.

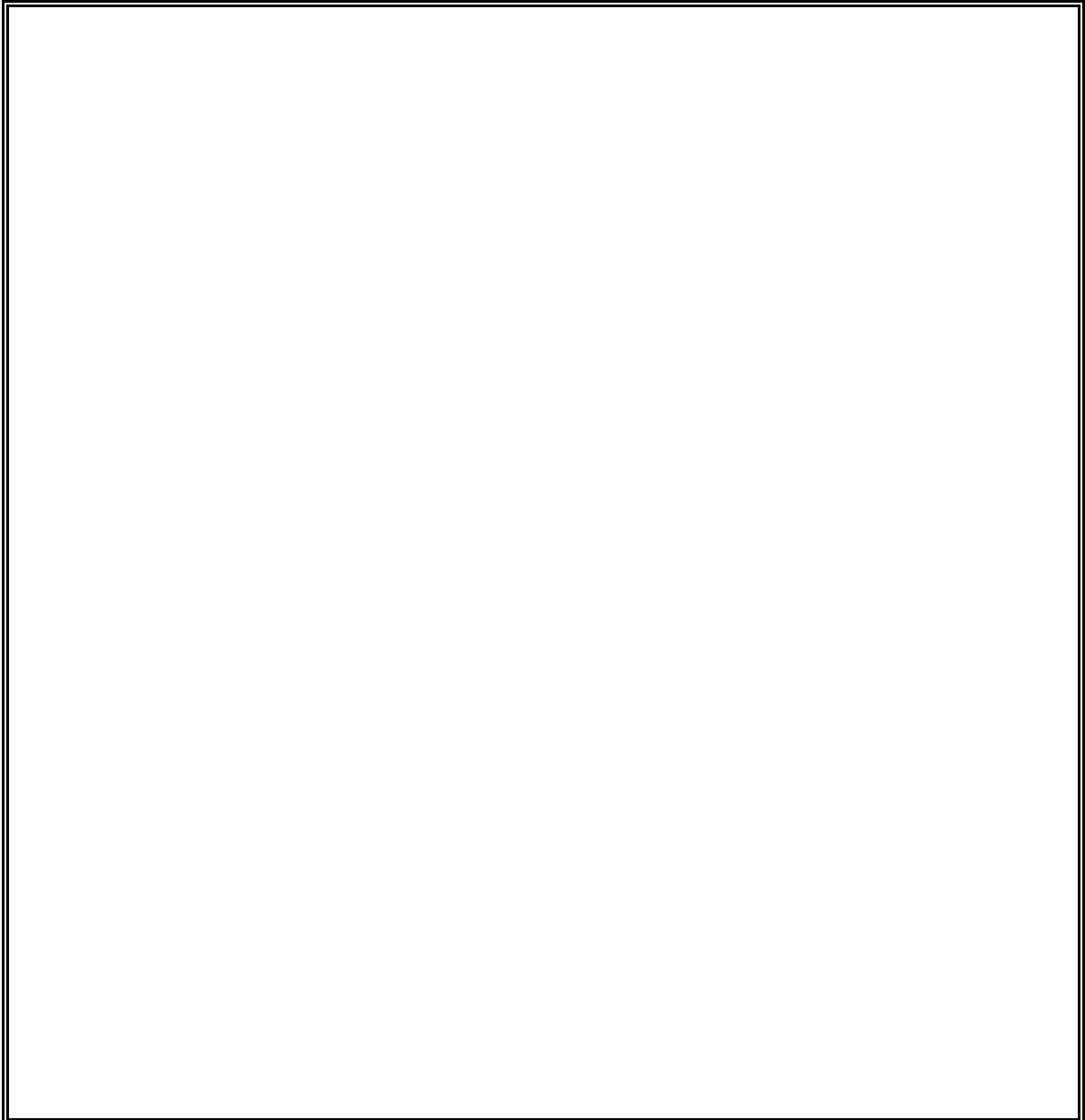
Decide what portion of the solution is realistic for your group to do. Then find ways to involve others to do the other things which should be done, but which the group cannot or has decided not to do. For example, a 4-H group that wants to eliminate drugs from their neighborhood may want to limit their efforts to doing an educational campaign to discourage drug use, and to establishing neighborhood watch programs to report drug-related activity. People who might be asked to do other things are police and sheriff deputies to monitor and arrest suspects, landlords to evict drug-trafficking tenants, volunteer groups to remove trash and clean up the area, legislators to pass stringent drug laws, judges to impose harsher sentences, schools and potential employers to provide meaningful training and job opportunities, etc.

Step 4: Deciding What Will Be Done And Who Will Do It

Making sure each member has at least one major assignment to do as a part of the service activity is essential for success! Believing you're an important part of an important effort is one of the best motivators in the world! Assignments should be tailored to the interests, abilities, ages, and potential of each member. A good way to do this is to list everything that needs to be done. Ask each person to list their top three preferences for the assignments they'd most like to do, and give each person one of their preferences as their main responsibility. Then divide up the remainder of the jobs evenly so that everyone does their fair share of the less popular responsibilities as well. Make sure there are more than enough jobs to go around so that everyone has at least one important and interesting assignment, and so that no one gets "stuck" with more than one or two "mundane" jobs.

4-H Service Activity Ideas

- To begin this part of the discussion, everyone brainstorm and jot down in the space below at least two or three ideas for community service projects your group could do. Then list how teens can help in getting each idea planned and accomplished.
- Next, we will go around the group and ask each person to share an idea. We will continue brainstorming until all the tips are posted.
- Please record the ideas your group might want to consider in the space below:

A large empty rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for recording ideas.

Additional 4-H Service Activity Ideas

The following are 4-H service activities which have been tried by 4-H groups throughout the world at one time or another. Your group might want to consider some of these ideas along with the ideas you think of during your brainstorming and decision-making sessions.

Discovering 4-H - Stencil house numbers on curbs in front of homes in your neighborhood.

Exploring 4-H - Make kites and contribute them to programs and agencies which provide toys and gifts for children for Christmas or when they are hospitalized.

Aquariums - Set up and regularly maintain an aquarium in a hospital waiting room, in a nursing home, in a funeral home, or at a library.

Archery - Conduct a community-wide archery event. Teach archery fundamentals and have a fun target-shooting contest.

Automotive - Sponsor a workshop for people to learn basic auto repair skills.

Beef - Work with local supermarkets and beef associations to do an in-store beef education day. Do displays and distribute information about modern beef production, and provide samples of beef products.

Bicycle - Work with local government officials to establish and maintain safe bike trails in your community for everyone's use.

Caged Birds - Collect and refurbish old bird cages and provide young birds and cages for grade schools.

Cats - Volunteer to help at local humane society shelters to feed and groom animals and clean cages.

Citizenship/International - Conduct an "International Night" for your community with international games and activities, international foods, and presentations by 4-H international exchanges.

Clothing - Provide alterations and mending service for people with arthritis or special clothing needs.

Computers - Raise funds to provide computers for local schools and community centers.

Creative Arts - Organize, promote, and help conduct a local "Creative and Cultural Arts Festival". Involve local artists and craftspeople in demonstrating and sharing their skills. Provide artwork for public buildings.

Dairy - Help community members learn the importance of dairy products and how they reach consumers' tables by conducting dairy farm open houses and doing slide shows for community groups about how milk is produced and processed.

Dog Care and Obedience - Raise guide dogs for the blind.

Electricity - Do a "light up our history" campaign to plan, raise funds for, install, and maintain exterior lighting for local landmarks and historical sites.

Family Life & Child Care - Provide free on-site child care services for community events such as PTA meetings, elections, concerts, Extension meetings, and so forth.

Field Crops - Contribute a portion of the products or the profits from your field crops projects to an international relief organization.

First Aid - Conduct a community safety campaign. Work with local radio and TV stations to publicize safety and first aid tips.

Fishing - Conduct a parent/child fishing expedition at a local lake or stream. Demonstrate various fishing methods and equipment. Top the morning off with a fish-fry for lunch!

Flower Gardening - Plan and maintain community flower beds in parks, at road intersections, beside bridges, and so forth. Take cut flowers to patients in veterans hospitals and long-term care facilities.

Vegetable Gardening - Grow a garden for the needy. Contribute produce from the garden to a community food bank, social service organization, or directly to individuals and families in need.

Foods and Nutrition - Prepare food to contribute to a community soup kitchen or senior center. Volunteer to assist with serving meals at such facilities.

Forestry - Work with local officials and land owners to plant trees in parks, vacant lots, and fields in your community. Publicize the importance of trees and forests in the environment.

Goats - Sponsor scholarships to enable more youth to attend workshops and conferences related to goat selection, care, feeding, and management.

Gun Safety - Give demonstrations on gun safety at local schools, in mall shows, and with other youth groups.

Health - Conduct a "healthy lifestyles" week and get people in your community to commit to eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and using good safety practices for an entire week.

Home Environment - Redecorate the TV or recreation room at a community nursing home or hospital.

Horses - Provide an opportunity for the public to learn basic horsemanship and ride a horse at a community festival or in another setting.

Insects - Provide equipment and conduct insect collection and study workshops for day camps, schools, and child care centers.

Laundry - Collect and launder bedding and used clothing, and contribute it to a homeless shelter or relief agency.

Lawn Care - Provide lawn care service for elderly and disabled people in your area.

Leadership - Conduct an information campaign about a local issue of concern to your group's members, or volunteer to help with a local candidate's political campaign.

Microwave Cookery & Equipment - Contribute and maintain microwave ovens and other kitchen equipment for a local volunteer fire department, teen center, run-away shelter, or other community facility.

Money Management - Designate a percentage of your group's funds to contribute to a worthy charity.

Natural Resources - Do a letter-writing campaign to encourage and support efforts to clean up the environment. Write to businesses and manufacturers to thank them for specific things they've done to reduce pollution, waste, and litter, and to offer suggestions for further efforts. Write to government officials about your views related to environmental issues and legislation.

Ohio Birds & Mammals - Survey what animals are facing extinction in your area and work to increase their numbers. For example, in some areas there is a need for people to raise and release bobwhite quail, and in other areas, bluebird housing is needed to reestablish bluebird populations.

Photography - photograph or videotape various community activities. Develop a community bulletin board to display photos in public buildings. Share videos with shut ins during a visit.

Plants & Soil Science - Construct and distribute composting bins and publicize information about the benefits of composting.

Poultry - Contribute dyed eggs and prizes for a community egg hunt in the spring.

Rabbits - Conduct a petting zoo with rabbits and other small gentle animals at a mall show or fair.

Rocketry & Airplanes - Sponsor a community model show with demonstrations and flying contests using model rockets and airplanes.

Rope - Help make swings and construct other equipment for a local park.

Self-Determined - Answer the question, "What could we do related to our project that would benefit others?"...Then do it!

Sheep - Raise a lamb to sell, and contribute the proceeds to provide trips for 4-Hers to state animal science workshops and conferences.

Small Animals - Hold an "adopt-a-pet" week in cooperation with a local pet center or humane society.

Small Engines - Provide free labor and do lawn mower tune-ups for all your neighbors.

Swine Production - Invite all the adults who have made a difference in your life (parents, teachers, clergy, elected officials, civic leaders, neighbors, grandparents and other relatives, youth group advisors, etc.) to a "Pork Barbecue and Appreciation Program". Treat them to a pork barbecue and fun entertainment.

Tractor Safety - Offer to do farm safety checks in your community.

Trapping - Conduct an information campaign to help the public understand trapper's perspectives related to animal welfare issues.

Veterinary Science - Volunteer time at an animal hospital to help in the care and recuperation of ill and injured animals.

Woodworking - Select items from your project to build and contribute to community centers or shelters.

Writing - Write regularly to people from your community serving overseas in the armed forces.

General

- Have each person in the group "adopt" at least one "secret friend". Choose as your "secret friend" someone who may not be getting along well at school, someone who doesn't seem to have many real sincere friends, or someone who may seem on the outside to have a perfect life but on the inside is facing some big challenges. Then for at least a year, do nice things for your "secret friend" without letting anyone at all know you're doing them. Send them friendly anonymous cards for holidays and their birthday, don't let other kids tease or make fun of them, get other people to encourage them to get involved in positive things, etc.
- Invite unpopular kids to be a part of your group, and strive to make each one an important, valued friend.
- Help disabled or senior citizens by doing yard work, fixing up homes, repairing appliances, shoveling sidewalks, visiting regularly, providing food, etc.
- Work with local officials to install street lighting or signs where needed.
- Make improvements at your 4-H camp or other county Extension facilities. Contribute needed items such as window curtains, sound systems, projectors and screens, extension cords, furniture, kitchen supplies, craft materials, nature study equipment, building supplies, tables & chairs, paint, screens, or other items your facility needs. Or, volunteer to help with camp or other facility "clean up fix up days".

- Pick up litter along roadsides and clean up vacant lots.
- Paint trash cans, fences, and equipment for schools, community centers, fairgrounds, etc.
- Plant trees and ground cover to control erosion and help the environment.
- Serve meals to shut-ins.
- Host a 4-H exchangee from another country and ask them to share their culture at meetings, mall shows & camps.
- Volunteer to help a local museum locate and restore items of local historical significance.
- Sponsor a series of dances or parties with a school or workshop for the mentally retarded.
- "Adopt" a needy family and provide food and gifts for holidays and special occasions.
- Conduct grooming and appearance workshops with youth participants in job training programs, hospital weight loss programs, etc.
- Contribute time, money, or other resources to support local charity drives.

Closing Thoughts

“If you treat individuals as if they are what they ought to be and can be, they will become what they ought to be and can be”

Goethe

“If you want youth to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders”

Abigail Van Buren

“The best portions of one’s life are our little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.”

William Wordsworth

“Do not look back in anger, or forward in fear, but around in awareness”

James Thurber

Challenge:

“Fifty years from now it will not matter
 what kind of car you drove,
 what kind of house you lived in,
 how much you had in your bank account, or
 what your clothes looked like.
 But the world may be a little better because
 you were important in the life of a child.”