



Planning 4-H Service Activities

*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.*

As the 4-H Pledge outlines, 4-H'ers are committed to becoming good citizens who contribute toward the betterment of others. Service activities help 4-H'ers develop such citizenship. Every member's 4-H experience should include citizenship development and service activities.

Each 4-H club and group should complete at least one major 4-H service activity per year. The group's program should reflect a balance of educational, service, and social activities. This guide is designed to help adult and teen leaders advise 4-H'ers in planning service activities which meet important needs, which are well received and supported by those served, and which provide for member ownership, pride, and growth.

How To Get Started

People support what they help to create. Every member should be involved in planning your group's activities.

Planning 4-H service activities involves making decisions. First, the group should decide what's needed. Second, they must determine what should be done to meet those needs. Next, the group must decide what they can do. Finally, they need to decide what they will do, and who will do what. Once these decisions are made, the group can begin arranging the details.

Step 1: Decide What's Needed

The first step in planning a 4-H service activity is to decide what's needed. Think about current events and problems in your community. Involving 4-H'ers in brainstorming or other decision-making techniques is a good way to figure out what's needed. The group may want to consider community needs related to their 4-H projects. The "4-H Service Activity Ideas" section lists ideas to consider along with others 4-H'ers identify.

Step 2: Decide What Should Be Done

Discuss the needs and ideas. Decide what your group thinks should be priorities for your community. Also identify other people who are affected by the problems and issues, and consider them in deciding what the group should do.

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

Your group will probably need to narrow the focus of your activity. For example, if your highest priority is to get rid of drug dealers and marijuana growers, it's unlikely you'll be able to do the job alone. Decide what is realistic for your group to do. Then find ways to involve other people to do other things. For example, a 4-H group that wants to eliminate drugs from their neighborhood may want to focus on doing an educational campaign to discourage drug use, and to establishing neighborhood watch programs to report drug-related activity. At the same time, they can support and encourage law enforcement officers to arrest dealers, landlords to evict drug-trafficking tenants, volunteer groups to remove trash and clean up the area, legislators to pass stringent drug laws, etc.

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

Making sure each member has at least one major assignment to do in 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 which needs to be done. Ask each person to list three preferences for the assignments they'd most like to do. Assign each person one of their preferences as their main responsibility. Divide the remainder of the jobs evenly. Everyone should do a share of the less popular responsibilities. Make sure there are more than enough jobs to go around so that everyone has at least one important and interesting assignment, and no one gets "stuck" with more than one or two "boring" tasks.

4-H Service Activity Ideas

Your group may want to consider some of these suggestions along with your own ideas:

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

Exploring 4-H - Make kites to contribute to organizations which provide holiday or get-well gifts for children.

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

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

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

Beef - Work with supermarkets to do an in-store beef education day with displays, information about beef production, and samples.

Bicycle - Work with local 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 school classrooms.

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, food, and presentations.

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

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

Creative Arts - Provide artwork for public buildings.

Dairy - Conduct dairy farm open houses and do 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, fund, install, and maintain exterior lighting for local landmarks and historical sites.

Family Life & Child Care - Provide child care services for events such as PTA meetings, elections, concerts, Extension meetings, etc.

Field Crops - Contribute a portion of the products/profits from your 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 fishing equipment and have a fish-fry for lunch!

Flower Gardening - Maintain flower beds in public places. 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 or other group.

Foods and Nutrition - Volunteer to assist with preparing and serving meals at soup kitchens, community centers, etc.

Forestry - Plant trees in local parks, vacant lots, and fields. Publicize the importance of trees and forests in the environment.

Goats - Sponsor scholarships for youth to attend workshops 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 using good health practices for seven days.

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

Horses - Provide opportunities for the general public to learn basic horsemanship and ride a horse.

Insects - Provide equipment and conduct insect collection and study workshops for camps, schools, and day 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, or volunteer to help with a local candidate's political campaign.

Microwave Cookery & Equipment - Contribute microwave ovens and other equipment for a local volunteer fire department or teen center.

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

Natural Resources - Write businesses and lawmakers with suggestions and thanks for specific things they do to reduce pollution.

Ohio Birds & Mammals - Survey what animals are facing extinction in your area and work to increase their numbers.

Photography - Photograph or videotape community activities. Display photos in public buildings. Share videos with shut ins.

Plants & Soil Science - Construct and distribute composting bins and publicize 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 model show with demonstrations and 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 to 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 - Treat everyone who's made a difference in your life to a "Pork Barbecue and Appreciation Program".

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

Trapping - Conduct a 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 have many real sincere friends, or someone who's hurting on the inside. Then every week for a year, do nice things for your "secret friend" without letting anyone know you're doing them.
- ... Invite unpopular kids to be a part of your group, and 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, etc.
- ... Make improvements at your 4-H camp or other facilities.
- ... Pick up litter along roadsides and clean up vacant lots. Maintain equipment for schools, community centers, fairgrounds, etc.
- ... Plant trees and ground cover to control erosion and help the environment.
- ... Volunteer to help a local museum locate and restore items of local historical significance.

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



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



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