



Marilyn A. Corbin, Ph.D.
 Assistant Director of Cooperative Extension
 and State Program Leader
 for Children, Youth and Families

Cooperative Extension and Outreach
 The Pennsylvania State University
 401 Agricultural Administration Building
 University Park, PA 16802-2603

(814) 863-6109
 Fax: (814) 863-7776
 E-mail: MCorbin@psu.edu

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We're glad to have your child involved in 4-H and we'd like to invite you and your family to become a 4-H family. You, your child, and the rest of your family will learn and have fun in the 4-H program. Boys and girls who have the interest and support of caring adults will have a special 4-H experience.

What is 4-H?

4-H is the youth development program of Penn State Cooperative Extension. The program fosters citizenship and leadership as well as growth through a variety of learning experiences. As a 4-H member, your child will participate in a variety of ways. 4-H'ers "learn by doing" through involvement in projects. 4-H members make new friends and learn to work and play with other young people and with adults. They develop self-confidence by speaking before groups and by receiving recognition for their achievements.

What is a 4-H group or club?

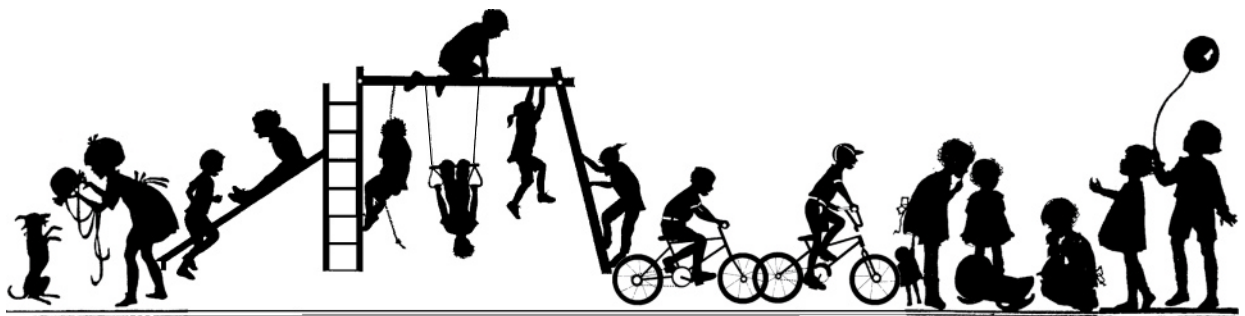
Boys and girls from 8 to 19 years of age meet to plan and direct their own programs under the leadership of an older teenager or adult. They may belong to an organized club or special interest group, participate in a school enrichment program or after-school program, or study alone with a parent or other adult. They may meet on a formal basis with elected officers and hold regular meetings, or meet informally to work on their projects.

What is a 4-H project?

4-H is a people program. The objective is to assist in boys' and girls' development. The projects are tools used in teaching responsibility, developing appreciation, creating initiative, and helping 4-H members learn the process of decision-making. Working on a 4-H project enables a 4-H'er to learn about a variety of subjects or to develop a skill. A 4-H member may choose from over 150 projects, including gardening, sewing, pet care, rocketry, insects, careers, wildlife, livestock, horses, food and nutrition, and child care. 4-H members usually sign up for one or more projects each year.

Who helps your child?

Adult (and teen) volunteers or family members assist and guide 4-H members as they work on projects and participate in various activities. The leader teaches 4-H'ers how to think—not what to think.



What can parents do?

Your child needs your interest and support, as he/she becomes an active 4-H'er. Parental involvement can help ensure the best learning experience for your child. You can help by:

- ⊙ *Sharing*—Take an interest in your child's 4-H projects and activities. Listen, look and offer suggestions, but don't take over. Learning by doing is the 4-H way. A child learns by his or her mistakes and successes.
- ⊙ *Preparing*— Help your child understand the value of projects and presentations done well and on time. Help your child understand the importance of following through.
- ⊙ *Being There*—Your child will gain more from 4-H by regular attendance at club meetings and involvement in 4-H activities. Attend meetings with them. Get to know the 4-H leader. Lend a hand whenever you can. Your help can range from providing transportation to refreshments.
- ⊙ Keep informed about what your child and the club are doing.
- ⊙ Become acquainted with the leaders.
- ⊙ Show interest and enthusiasm for your child's 4-H participation.
- ⊙ Help your child select 4-H projects.
- ⊙ Find out what is to be learned and how. Guide your child but don't do it for him/her. Help the child manage time so the project is completed.
- ⊙ Provide your child and others with transportation to club meetings and other 4-H activities.
- ⊙ Volunteer to be a 4-H leader. You have knowledge and skills that will strengthen the 4-H program.

Who participates in 4-H?

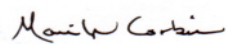
Now that your child is a 4-H member, the whole family can participate. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers, sisters—everyone in the family can be a part of the 4-H experience, together. Today, many families become fragmented because of jobs and individual interests. 4-H offers many opportunities for families to do things together. Picnics, fairs, trips, camps, shows, and special club and county-wide events are designed for family participation. You and your family are invited to be a 4-H family.

4-H gets results

A national 4-H alumni study found that 4-H, more than any other youth organization, helped youth develop public speaking and presentation skills. 4-H alumni also were identified as more actively involved in their communities as adults.

Children grow and develop rapidly. As parents, you want to make the most of these years and ensure that your children are involved in activities that will help them learn life skills. The 4-H experience can provide knowledge and *"make life better"* throughout your child's life.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Corbin, Ph.D.

Assistant Director of Cooperative Extension
and State Program Leader for Children, Youth, and Families