



WELC ME *to*



4-H



Dear 4-H Parent:

Welcome to West Virginia 4-H! We are excited you have selected 4-H for your child, and we look forward to a productive partnership with you to ensure your child gets the most out of the many learning opportunities that 4-H has to offer. Your child joins one out of every four young people in West Virginia, (that's more than 7 million young people) and 500,000 teens and adults who are involved in 4-H nationwide.

We know that in order to develop happy, talented young people who will grow into happy, productive adults, our programs must be fun. Through 4-H your child will have opportunities to participate in fun, hands-on learning experiences in science, technology, agriculture, health, civic and community engagement, creative arts and much more. We encourage young people to follow their interests and try new experiences. In 4-H, we help young people to "learn by doing."

As your child participates in our programs, we encourage you to provide assistance and support in the completion of projects, preparation for activities and participation in events. We also encourage you to share your feedback with us and consider becoming a 4-H volunteer. We know that as partners, we share the responsibility for your child's success in our program. As the 4-H motto says, we "make the best better," and we are excited to have your help in making the best 4-H experiences even better for your child.

We hope that the enclosed information will help answer some of the questions you have about 4-H. Your local WVU Extension agent or staff member will be happy to speak with you about our many programs and answer any questions you may have about the opportunities that await your child in 4-H. Please do not hesitate to call.

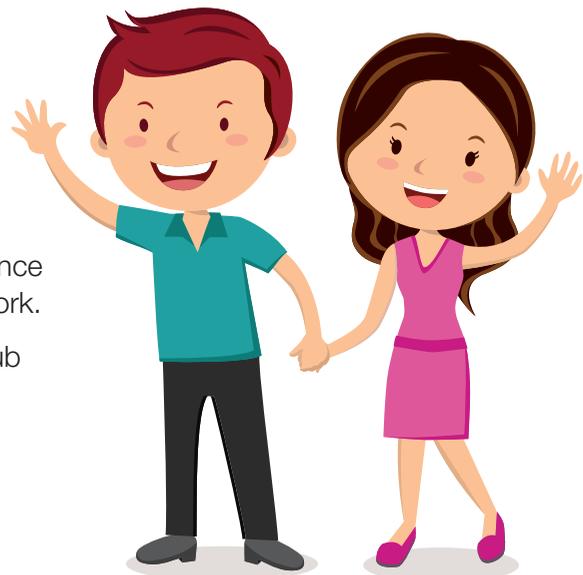
Best Wishes from Your 4-H Family



Parents and Guardians – How Your Child Can Be Successful in 4-H

The West Virginia 4-H program encourages the involvement of parents and guardians, as each brings unique talents and experiences that can be of benefit to local 4-H clubs. The 4-H club meetings and activities are places where parents and guardians are welcome to participate. Not all parents and guardians may be able to participate to the same degree; however, below are some guidelines to help your child be successful in the West Virginia 4-H program:

1. Encourage 4-H members to have fun and try new things!
2. Give praise for good work and provide encouragement when problems arise.
3. Provide constructive comments, ideas or suggestions that support the growth and improvement of your child and his/her 4-H club.
4. Help your child understand that character counts. Youths should strive for high standards of fairness, honesty, respect and trustworthiness.
5. Serve as a resource for fundraisers, community service projects or educational programs.
6. Provide refreshments, supplies or other resources as needed for your child's 4-H club or related activities.
7. Help your child learn the 4-H Pledge and 4-H songs as introduced at club meetings.
8. Assist your child in selecting the appropriate 4-H project or activity based on his/her interests. Be sure your child completes the project, in accordance to county and state deadlines.
9. Help your child meet club and county requirements for the year. Read communications from the 4-H club leader and/or the county Extension office to stay on top of dates, deadlines and guidelines.
10. Provide adequate supervision and guidance but allow your child to do his/her own work.
11. Encourage regular attendance at 4-H club meetings.



Facts About 4-H

Emblem

The 4-H emblem is a green four-leaf clover with a white H on each leaf. Only approved 4-H members and volunteers are permitted to use the 4-H name and emblem.

Colors

White symbolizes purity.

Green stands for life, springtime and youth.



4-H Pledge

The pledge captures the true essence of 4-H. It speaks to the meaning behind the four H's – head, heart, hands and health. The 4-H Pledge plays an important role in all 4-H activities. It is said by youth members at the start of 4-H club meetings, following the Pledge of Allegiance. It is also said at 4-H camp, achievement days and other club events.

The pledge is as follows:

I pledge

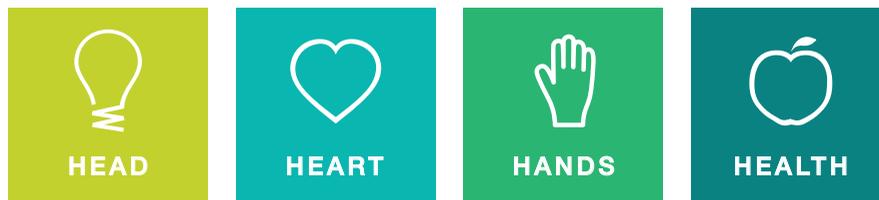
My Head to clearer thinking (right hand points to forehead)

My Heart to greater loyalty (right hand over heart)

My Hands to larger service (arms slightly bent to front with palms up)

And my Health to better living (arms at sides)

For my club, my community, my country and my world.



Motto

“To Make the Best Better”

The intent of the motto is to encourage youths to make their best efforts better through various 4-H educational opportunities.

Slogan

“Learn by Doing”

The 4-H program gives young people the opportunity to experience new things through project work, community club activities and 4-H camp. Because of these experiences, youth learn skills that will guide them through life.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is 4-H?

The 4-H program provides informal education through clubs, camps and other activities. It utilizes approved 4-H volunteers to help deliver programs where youth learn about topics, such as:

- Art and music
- Animals and agriculture
- Citizenship (community service and leadership development)
- Communications (theater arts and photography)
- Financial education
- Healthy living
- Science and technology
- World cultures

The 4-H program is part of the youth development program unit of the WVU Extension Service, which is the outreach component of West Virginia University.

2. What does it cost to join 4-H?

In West Virginia, 4-H is free to join. Some 4-H activities and projects may involve costs to pay for supplies or refreshments. Certain events may have travel and registration costs.

3. Who can join 4-H?

In West Virginia, youths ages 9 to 21 may join 4-H. A pre-4-H program, called “Cloverbuds” is designed for youths ages 5 to 8 years old. The program offers many exciting opportunities for all youths, whether they live on farms, in the suburbs or in cities. With 7 million youths, 4-H is the largest youth organization in the country. In West Virginia, over one quarter of all youth are 4-H members. The 4-H program offers membership without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability or handicap.

4. What is a 4-H club?

Clubs are the cornerstone of the West Virginia 4-H Program. A 4-H club is comprised of at least five youth members and two approved adult volunteer leaders. Clubs meet in schools, churches or community centers. The 4-H club model has youths leading meetings, with adults serving as advisers and in supportive roles.

5. What do youths do in 4-H clubs?

A club meeting has a short business meeting to teach leadership skills, followed by an educational lesson and recreation time. Club meetings also set aside time for 4-H members to work on 4-H projects, which are educational lessons with hands-on activities. Projects include topics such as gardening, rockets, small animals, nutrition, photography and woodworking. In general, 4-H clubs complete community service projects, learn new skills, make new friends and most important, have lots of fun! Clubs meet monthly and meetings last one hour to one and a half hours.



6. What are Cloverbuds and how are they different from other 4-H members?

Cloverbuds are youths ages 5 to 8 years old. The Cloverbud program provides age-appropriate activities for this age group. Some 4-H clubs have Cloverbuds, where all members do the Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge; then, the Cloverbuds split off to do fun, hands-on activities appropriate for their age. Other 4-H clubs are designated solely for Cloverbuds.

7. How can a youth become a 4-H member?

The first step is to identify a 4-H club to join. Then, the interested youth must complete a 4-H member enrollment card, along with a health history form that may be secured from the 4-H club leader or the county Extension office. Finally, identify the next 4-H club meeting and make plans to attend.

8. Who manages the 4-H program?

The West Virginia 4-H program is managed by the West Virginia University Extension Service, which has local offices in all 55 counties. Each county has an Extension agent responsible for overseeing and coordinating the county 4-H program.

Volunteers are essential to every county 4-H program. The Extension agent works directly with these volunteers, who serve as leaders for 4-H clubs or serve at 4-H camps. Adults interested in becoming an approved 4-H volunteer need to contact their county Extension agent.

9. Where does 4-H get its funding?

The WVU Extension Service, which 4-H is a part of, receives financial support from three levels of government:

- a. *Federal* – the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- b. *State* – West Virginia University
- c. *County* – County Commissions and Boards of Education

- Screened, trained adult leader
- Meetings in a safe locale
- Constant

The state and county 4-H program also receives financial support from private sources, such as donors and grants.

10. What other programs does 4-H offer?

The 4-H program provides a wide array of programs beyond 4-H clubs. These include:

- County and state 4-H camps
- Community service projects
- County and state fairs
- Leadership conferences
- Field trips in the county, state and beyond (out-of-state and international)
- Hosting international students from abroad
- Livestock showmanship and judging competitions
- Public speaking competitions

All 4-H programs are designed to give 4-H’ers the opportunity to increase self-confidence and learn new skills.



11. How do I learn more about 4-H in my county?

Contact your county Extension office. Contact information can be found at <https://extension.wvu.edu/offices>. The Extension agent or county office staff will provide information on the 4-H club and other program opportunities specific to your county.

12. There isn't a 4-H club in my community. Can my child still be involved?

Yes. If there is space in a nearby community club, your child may participate in that club. Even better, start a club in your community! All you need is a dedicated, caring adult willing to volunteer once a month. Another option is to become a member at large. Contact your local WVU Extension Service office for details.

13. Will my child be safe?

Absolutely! Club and camp advisers and leaders are carefully screened by the WVU Extension Service and trained by our 4-H professionals. Since each club is led by a local adult, chances are you will even know your child's club leader outside of 4-H. Call your county Extension office for a list of local clubs and leaders.

The clubs take place in a safe, local space, such as schools, churches, fire departments and members' homes. Your child will always be under watchful, caring eyes. At camps, which take place at locations we have used safely for years, leaders guide your children through an exciting and safe experience. If, for any reason, your child should become ill or injured, our camp leaders are trained in emergency response plans.

The 4-H program gives your child opportunities for new experiences and allows him/her to build confidence, responsibility, positive values, life skills and lifelong relationships with peers. The little amount of time and resources that you have to put into 4-H will be far outweighed by what your child gets out of 4-H.

14. What is a 4-H project?

All 4-H members must complete a member enrollment card obtained at a 4-H club meeting or the county Extension office. This form asks general contact information that will be used to communicate with your family about club, county, state and national 4-H events and activities.

The member enrollment card also allows members to sign up for 4-H projects. A 4-H project is a self-paced project on a topic or subject that the 4-H member wants to explore. The member is supplied with a project book, which includes hands-on activities and lessons related to the subject matter. Projects are a long-standing traditional activity that culminates with an exhibit or final product. Oftentimes, the final exhibit or product is shown at a fair or other county-wide event to showcase the skills that were learned through the project. Ribbons are awarded based on the scoring of the project book, exhibit and year-round activities that the 4-H member participated in.



4-H Program Philosophy

It has been found that young people learn best when they are involved in their learning; therefore, the 4-H philosophy is based on a “learn by doing” approach, where 4-H members develop new skills, talents and abilities through hands-on activities. Central to this model is positive and safe learning environments that are led by caring, adult role models.

Get to Know Your Agent

The county Extension agent is a faculty member of West Virginia University, who is jointly employed by the county and state, to bring programs and services to his/her community. Some counties have a designated 4-H Extension agent who works solely with 4-H members and volunteers, while other counties have county Extension agents who must work with a variety of audiences and community members. To learn more about the Extension agent(s) in your county, visit <https://extension.wvu.edu/offices>.



Glossary of 4-H Terms

Activity record – outlines a 4-H member's participation in 4-H, school and community activities. Must be completed annually as a part of the overall 4-H project score.

Camp – an experience for youths and adults that builds personal development and life skills. There are two types of camps: residential camps where lodging is available, and day camps that focus on a specialty area and do not provide overnight lodging. Check with your county Extension agent for more information about attending. State 4-H camps are held at WVU Jackson's Mill.

Cloverbuds – a pre-4-H program (not part of the 4-H record) for children in first and second grades.

Club year – runs from October 1 to September 30.

Code of Conduct – a contractual agreement accepted by 4-H volunteers and members to guide behavior during involvement in the West Virginia 4-H program.

Community 4-H club – a 4-H group (organized with officers following a planned program) that meets several months of the year in a local community or school.

Community service project – a 4-H activity in which members make a contribution to the local community. The group chooses a project based on a community need.

County 4-H Leaders' Association – all adult 4-H volunteers are invited to participate in an association that primarily serves to provide volunteer training and support, and to set priorities and plans for county 4-H functions. An Extension agent serves as an adviser to the leaders' association. The association is usually organized with officers, a program of work and regularly established meeting times.

Exhibits – opportunities for 4-H individuals or groups to display skills and achievements. Oftentimes, these will be the product of 4-H project work.

4-H member – a youth who has enrolled in a 4-H learning experience between third grade or 9 years of age, and has not reached his/her 21st birthday on or before December 31. The learning experience may be club, special interest group, school enrichment or individual.

Officers' Training School – an annual county event that brings officers of all 4-H groups together. Members are taught in groups according to their respective offices.



Project – method for teaching youths many new life skills. A variety of topics are offered. Members share in setting goals, making decisions, learning and evaluating.

Public speaking – a talk prepared by a 4-H member and given to an audience on a selected topic.

Teen leader – teenage 4-H'er with previous 4-H experience who provides leadership in the 4-H program. The teen may provide support or sole leadership for an activity or project.

Visual presentation – a “show and tell” presentation given by a 4-H member. The presentation shows learned skills and recommended practices related to a specific topic. Posters and other support materials are used.

Volunteer selection process – the selection and placement of qualified volunteers for 4-H youth activities. The process ensures a safe environment for all youths involved in Extension activities.

West Virginia Guide to 4-H Projects – a publication that outlines all 4-H projects, project activities and exhibit requirements.



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Director, Cooperative Extension Service, West Virginia University.*

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