

Great tips from one Leader to another...

Involving Parents in Your 4-H Club

Presented to Livingston County 4-H County Administrative Leaders September 18, 2000 by Judy Paulsen, 4-H Leader for 19 years, The Rangers

The most valuable part of your 4-H club is the parents. Without their support, 4-H clubs cannot survive. Here are a few tips on how to involve parents and family members in your 4-H Club...

1. Make sure parents understand the purpose of 4-H.

My philosophy of 4-H is that we are here to help the parents develop character in the members, not to teach a craft or skill. Those are extra benefits of the program.

2. Invite parents to all meetings.

Parents should always feel welcome at meetings and encouraged to sit among the members and observe the meeting. Talk to parents at every opportunity (before and after meetings). If you send a newsletter, address it to the family, not just the member

3. Give parents a chance to meet other parents.

Consider having a meeting of new parents to explain 4-H to them--goals, expectations, requirements. Hold at least one family activity during the year (a picnic or something other than the fair). Invite parents to attend Spring Achievement (or other activities) even if their child is not involved.

4. Remember, not all parents are good at ALL things.

Encouragement, transportation, helpers, resources, knowledge, leadership, guidance, provide refreshments are all great ways to help.

5. Parents will be involved for different reasons.

Such as: desire to help their child, enjoy helping others, personal satisfaction, have a skill to share, obligation--feel it is the right thing to do, enjoy new experiences, their child wants them to help, someone asked them to help.

6. Why parents won't get involved.

No one has asked them to be involved. No one has explained how to be involved. Children ask them not to be involved. Too many other commitments. Feel they have nothing to offer. They don't know how to get involved without seeming pushy.

7. Recognize parents as an integral part of your 4-H club.

Let parents know you appreciate their support and assistance. Thank parents publicly--have a recognition meeting. Encourage members to thank their parents and others for their support. Nominate a parent each year for the "Parent Support Award".

8. Encourage parents to lead a project.

Find out the parents' area of interest. Encourage the parent to help a leader for a year or two. After working with the parent for a year or two, ask them to lead a project on their own (be available to help if they request it).