

Letters to New Leaders: Letter 6



Opportunities for 4-H Volunteers

Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs

Dear Volunteer Leader

As you become more comfortable with the various aspects of the 4-H program, you will want to challenge yourself to take on new leadership experiences. You, as well as club members, are gaining knowledge and skills.

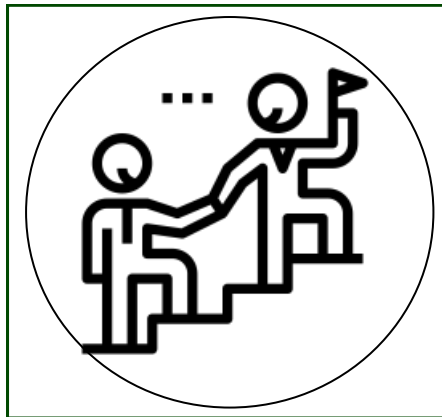
4-H leaders have many opportunities to learn more about the program or specific subject areas, make new friends and develop additional skills. Check with your local 4-H volunteer staff for resources and support.

Build a 4-H Youth Team

As you polish your delegation skills, remember that older youth leaders can be an untapped source of leadership for your club organization, and they may lead a project or an activity. Club leadership gives members an opportunity to help others and to grow and develop skills through practice.

Youth leaders may be teenagers, although there is no exact age for young people to take on club leadership. Youth leaders are important. Other kids relate to them and respect their position. They should be responsible youth who show concern for the club and other members.

Encouraging all members to take on leadership helps them be ready for formal leadership assignments.



Local Opportunities

If you have not already attended a county training, talk with your local 4-H staff to find out when the next one is scheduled and attend. This presentation is most likely role-specific and different from the one-time, required 4-H volunteer orientation that is focused on safety, our mission, etc.

Leader Training

One of the best ways to stay up-to-date with the 4-H program, learn new skills and find out what others are doing is by attending county club or project leader training.

County Committees

Consider becoming active in a county 4-H or extension council to expand your group communication skills along with other adults and youth who represent their 4-H groups and can serve as mentors.

Consider one of several other 4-H volunteer leader roles: county fair superintendent, contest coordinator, camp counselor or day camp counselor.

Request a multicounty leaders meeting from your 4-H staff to gain new knowledge and 4-H friends.

Youth Civic Leadership Summit

Each year, there is a summit designed for teams of youth and adult partners. This event consistently gives volunteers opportunities to see and grow youth leadership in a fun and engaging learning environment. The results of the summit include the youth-adult partner team going back to their local area and implementing best practice strategies for personal, club and community growth.

Online Opportunities

The 4-H Volunteer e-Forums, hosted by the North Central Regional Volunteer Specialists, are a great resource to 4-H staff, youth and adult 4-H volunteers. Offered every other year, each forum provides research-based topics and activities of high interest to youth leaders. The forums are webinars delivered to groups gathered in a library, school, extension office or some other internet-connected meeting space.

The e-Forums are recorded for future viewing. Go to <http://fyi.uwex.edu/ncrvd/4-h-volunteer-e-forum/> to learn more and download resources.

Key Resources

In addition to the publications listed in the six letters to leaders, the University of Missouri Extension center offers additional resources available from your local 4-H staff and also on the Internet. Some resources you might consider:

- The Missouri [4-H Clover](#) contains information and project listings for members and their families. It also includes lists of leadership guides and events.
- Missouri [4-H Spirit](#) contains an update on what is happening in Missouri 4-H, ideas for club leadership, and opportunities for 4-H leaders and clubs.
- The [National 4-H Source Book](#) lists items you can order from the National 4-H Council, including gifts, clothing, resource materials, and awards items with the official 4-H emblem.
- Leader guides are available for many of the 4-H projects members can choose. They provide guidance on working with members, as well as extra

information for volunteers who are helping youth in specific project areas. The guides are listed with the projects in the [4-H Clover](#).

- The state 4-H web site is located at 4-h.missouri.edu, and includes information for all 4-H leaders, staff and youth members.
- University of Extension online at extension.missouri.edu gives links to state and county Extension programs.
- The National 4-H webpage, maintained by the USDA, is www.4husa.org.
- The National 4-H Council's webpage is fourhcouncil.edu. It has links to state pages as well as counties and clubs throughout the nation.
- Last, but not least, go to <http://protectmokids.com> to take part in a free, online training on Child Abuse and Neglect Mandated Reporting that will increase your understanding of very important safety matters.

- Quality Matters in 4-H Tool Kits are posted to the Missouri 4-H web site and research and short lessons on what youth workers (staff and volunteer) need to DO to help kids feel safe, supported, engaged in learning and leader opportunities. Toolkit topics including [Planning and Structure](#); [Welcoming](#); [Encouraging and Engaging](#); [Youth Voice and Reflection](#). Access these materials at <http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteer/>

We hope this letter has been helpful. We know it is a challenge to be a leader in 4-H. We also know it is one of the most rewarding experiences you will have—helping youth develop into successful, caring citizens and helping them be leaders for *today!*

Adapted from *Letters to New 4-H Leaders*, M.A. Dodd, L. Hoglum, and M. Robinson (1998) Oregon State University Cooperative Extension, Corvallis, OR. Updated in August 2017 by Elaine Anderson, Elaine George, Tammy Gillespie and Paula Skillicorn.

Quality Matters in 4-H: A Checklist for Staff and Volunteers

- ___ I know how to provide a safe physical and emotional youth program environment
- ___ I know how to provide a warm welcome to all youth, free of bias or exclusionary behavior
- ___ I know the physical safety safeguards I should put in place at all 4-H events
- ___ I know best practice strategies for helping youth reframe conflict if needed
- ___ I know how to support youth engagement with materials and abstract ideas
- ___ I allow youth officers to maintain control at least 50 percent of the club meetings
- ___ I know how to support youth interaction through multiple planning techniques
- ___ I know how to provide all youth with specific encouragement rather than blanket praise
- ___ I know how to support youth decision making in content and process choices
- ___ I know how to create opportunities for all youth to serve in a leadership role in some capacity
- ___ I know how to create opportunities for all youth to express ideas with others
- ___ I know how to provide all youth with opportunities to reflect and evaluate activity and club experiences

Thank you for your commitment to improving 4-H program quality through volunteer development!