

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

Utilizing Community Resources

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Every community has numerous resources which can be utilized to expand and enrich the local 4-H program. A primary goal of the 4-H program is to give young people guidance in making decisions, training in specific skills and guidance in becoming caring, contributing citizens. The local 4-H program should extend beyond the members and parents to include the community and its resources.

Why Use Community Resources?

Utilizing community services is important to the support of 4-H programs and at the same time provides opportunities for youth to learn about strengthening their communities through service.

Reasons for community involvement are as follows:

1. Expands the learning experiences of youth. It helps them become aware of educational and career opportunities they may not have had prior contact with or known about.
2. Expands the visibility of 4-H. Resource persons who work with 4-H'ers on projects or activities are surely going to talk about this experience. Publicity becomes an ongoing activity because word-of-mouth is usually more enthusiastic than the printed word.
3. Involving people of the community with 4-H builds

good public relations. The reciprocal relationship between the community and 4-H has a lasting impact and keeps the community "up on 4-H." People are usually "down" on something they are not "up" on. Working together on projects, activities and programs unites those involved.

4. Working with community resources provides an increased abundance of educational material. All adult clubs have resource materials for their particular organization. These materials will expand the learning materials of 4-H members.

People are committed to those things they are involved with and those things they help create.

Survey Your Community

Make a list of every available resource in your community. Include the service clubs, special interest groups, county officials and county services, individuals, as well as local and state officials residing in your community.

Contact a key person in this organization or group or contact the individual resource person. Everyone in your community has something to contribute to 4-H. You may not get them all involved, but this should not keep you from trying.

Personal contacts are best. Let people know what they can do for 4-H



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and what 4-H can do for them. (See the fact sheet "4-H Resource Sign-Up Sheet," CES-645.)

Make a file of the resources you can use with the 4-H program. Share this file with your 4-H members. Program planning and community resources go hand in hand. The ultimate goal is for your 4-H'ers to make the contacts, arrange the programs, follow-up with the thank-yous and do the evaluations.

All of this does not happen overnight. It must be carefully pursued by the 4-H leader. After a good program of utilizing resources is established in a community, 4-H members can take over.

Points to Remember

1. People in your community should be tapped by 4-H leaders to help extend, expand and develop the 4-H program. 4-H leaders must take the lead.

2. The 4-H club leader's relationship with the community is most important and is the real basis for success in the development of a 4-H program that is action packed and education oriented.
3. 4-H leaders should personally contact people in their communities to establish a resource file. Teen leaders can be taught to do this also.
4. The best way to unite 4-H with a community is to use the resources in the community and to keep the club involved with community projects.

People care about things that touch their own lives. If 4-H touches the lives of the people in the community, the community will care.

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