



Promoting 4-H and Getting More Members for Your Club

Many national and local surveys have found that the public has heard of 4-H but doesn't understand it or realize that it exists in their own counties. Due to its history long-rooted in rural areas and traditional agricultural and home economics projects, many people aren't aware that 4-H is this and much more. Its focus is on youth development.

One way your club can help to promote 4-H and get more members for the program (and your club) is to make promotion one of its goals. Following are some things to consider in promoting 4-H and some easy ways your club can help.

Happy Members are the Best Promotion

Word-of-mouth is very powerful! If your club's members are happy with their 4-H experiences, they'll probably tell others about it. Unfortunately, if they're unhappy they will likely tell even more people! This is a sad but true phenomenon of human nature.

Welcome New Members

When new members first attend your club meeting, be sure they are greeted and made to feel part of the group. Members may not know each other, especially in county-wide 4-H clubs. Some youth may be shy and have a difficult time getting acquainted. Take the initiative of introducing them and their parents to the club and its activities. Regularly include group interaction activities at club meetings so all members can get to know each other better. If new members don't feel comfortable with the club fairly soon, they probably won't be back. And they may not be happy!

Set a Positive Example

For your message about 4-H to be believable, your club must practice what they preach. Members should be examples of youth who are respectful and service minded. However, don't expect "perfection." Kids must still be kids! Tell the story of what and how much members have *learned* from being in 4-H. After all, education is the mission of 4-H.

Promotion Tips

Promotion lets people know about the good *and* the bad. Be sure your club is telling a positive and accurate story about 4-H. What people think (their perceptions) is as influential as the facts. Therefore, your promotional efforts should be positive and polished. It need not be perfect, but avoid shabby, poorly planned promotion efforts. For instance, make sure posters are neat and complete. A professional artist isn't necessary, but club members should take their work seriously!

Promotion should happen all of the time. Although special 4-H promotional events are held, this is only part of a total effort. Promotion is a *continual* process. Be consistent over time and keep the 4-H name and emblem in the public eye. Also, what wasn't important last month may be today. If you stop telling your message, you're missing people who may now be listening.



Be Creative!

Because people today are bombarded by all sorts of sensory stimuli through multi-media, they can easily become bored. They expect to see, hear, and try new things all of the time. Use this idea to your advantage! Try a new way to promote 4-H! Be unique and get noticed!

Some 4-H Promotion Ideas

Here are a few ideas to promote 4-H in your area. Use and adapt them as needed. Remember, be creative!

- “Tell a friend about 4-H.” Suggest that members tell their friends about 4-H and encourage them to join a 4-H club.
- Participate in National 4-H Week, county 4-H week, or other special promotional campaigns in your county.
- Wear 4-H jackets, buttons, T-shirts regularly—to school, club meetings, shopping, etc.
- Conduct community service projects regularly. Not only is this good for the community, it’s also good public relations for 4-H.
- Ask your county 4-H staff to send press releases about your club’s activities to local newspapers, radio, and television stations. This is a good job for a club secretary or reporter, with the help of an adult.
- Conduct a 4-H poster-making party/contest and put the best posters in public places (with permission). Be sure to include the 4-H name and how to join 4-H (including phone number) on posters and displays.
- Send thank-you letters from your club to groups and individuals who have helped 4-H and your club.
- Purchase and donate 4-H placemats for use in local restaurants.
- Arrange for members to give 4-H public presentations at school, in libraries, and to community groups.
- Encourage your members to participate in community functions, such as parades, as a 4-H club. Display a 4-H banner. Better yet, create a special banner just for your 4-H club.

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For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

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