

***belonging, mastery, independence, generosity***



## **Wyoming 4-H Philosophy**

# **Volunteers**



To have a successful 4-H program, volunteers are critical for the delivery and implementation of educational programming. To ensure a safe and positive learning environment for youth members, a selection process is in place to identify and appoint the most appropriate adult volunteers. An eligible adult volunteer can enroll at any time of the year and must meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 19 years old
- Enroll as a volunteer in respective county
- Pass Wyoming Department of Family Services/Department of Criminal Investigation (DFS/DCI) screening through the Wyoming 4-H Program (all leaders are re-screened every five years)
- Complete training requirements
- Obtain an appointment card from a county 4-H educator

Failure to meet or complete any of these requirements could prohibit the individual from becoming a volunteer leader. Only volunteers meeting the criteria above are considered official volunteers to the Wyoming 4-H program and can be entered in the 4-H Plus! computer software. An adult must be an official 4-H volunteer to have unsupervised access with 4-H youth.

In the Wyoming 4-H Program, four types of volunteer 4-H leaders are recognized:

*Project Leader* - A project leader is an adult volunteer who teaches and provides multiple educational opportunities to youth in a particular project area. Ideally, these volunteers will have subject-matter expertise in one of the projects offered through the 4-H program. Project curriculum that supports their efforts can be obtained through a county UW CES office.

*Key Leader* – A key leader is identified/appointed by a county 4-H educator as an experienced and knowledgeable individual who understands both subject-matter education and youth development concepts. These leaders can be utilized to train other volunteers and serve as a principal resource for the county 4-H program.

*Club Leader* – A club leader functions as the manager and facilitator for a club's efforts. He/she is the primary source of communication between the county 4-H office and club members (i.e. enrollment, entry deadlines, portfolio information, fundraising, county/state 4-H events, etc). Ideally, club leaders establish the proper environment that enhances youth development opportunities and life skills for the club's members. Under their direction, they help youth identify their club officers, have club meetings, and meet club/county requirements. Club leaders also ensure positive group dynamics are met through social interactions, community service, and leadership opportunities. Additionally, club leaders play a role with the county council.

*Activity/Event Leader* – An activity/event leader works for a specific period of time, typically organizing a specific activity or event (i.e. carnival chairperson, chaperone, dog show equipment builder, committee member, portfolio judge, camp cook, etc). They may or may not have educational responsibilities to the youth.

## **Recruitment**

Recruiting volunteers is an important responsibility for a 4-H educator. Educators need to utilize their county council and project enrollment data to determine the needs for volunteers. Volunteers can be recruited from all walks of life. Suggestions for identifying potential volunteers include parents of youth members, grandparents, local service organizations, senior centers, community organizations, college-age students, parochial schools, parents of home-schooled youth, etc.

## **Training**

The long-term success of the county 4-H program hinges upon well-trained volunteers. Volunteers can and should receive three broad areas of training: subject matter, positive youth development, and the 4-H philosophy. Leader training must be completed before attending any 4-H activity as a leader. Options for this training are listed below:

- A face-to-face meeting with the county 4-H educator
  - Risk management brochure
  - Child Protective Services brochure
  - Information related to the county 4-H program
  - Positive youth development principles
  - Wyoming 4-H philosophy
- Online training (all modules) **plus** a short face-to-face meeting covering:
  - Risk management brochure
  - Child Protective Services brochure
  - Information related to the county 4-H program
- Watch a DVD (being developed) **plus** a short face-to face meeting covering:
  - Risk management brochure
  - Child Protective Services brochure
  - Information related to the county 4-H program

- Subject-matter training should be provided on an ongoing basis and can be provided by the local county council, other volunteers, conferences, clinics, workshops, etc.

Volunteers shall complete one of the above trainings or one approved by the local county 4-H program at least every five years. This ensures a high level of understanding of educational programming needs, youth development principles, and keeps volunteers current regarding subject matter and 4-H procedures.

Additionally, shooting sports leaders and horse raters must be recertified every five years.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluating volunteers is important to ensure a positive and productive 4-H program is being delivered to the youth members. Components for volunteer evaluation can include:

- Youth retention
- Quantity and quality of education provided
- All youth are provided equal access to all opportunities
- Adherence to Child Protective Services policies principles (i.e. create a positive environment)
  - Refer to the *Essential Elements* of positive youth development
- Keeping up with volunteer training and certifications
- Quantity and quality of projects exhibited
- Sufficiently accomplish their role (i.e. carnival chair, treasurer, committee chair)

If determined a volunteer is unable to appropriately fulfill their responsibilities, the county 4-H educator may remove the volunteer from the 4-H program.

## **Recognition**

Recognizing volunteers for their service and accomplishments is vital to the program and as the volunteer's personal satisfaction. Educators should put forth a concerted effort in formulating a volunteer recognition system. When developing a volunteer reward system, consideration needs to be given to each volunteer's personal motivation for being involved in the 4-H program. Rewards could include:

- Membership card
- Personal thank-you or hand-written note (this should be used often)
- Identify a volunteer as a key resource (i.e. teaching other leaders)
- Expanded leadership roles (i.e. council president, key leader, chaperone, etc.)
- Plaques, certificates, trophies, pins, etc. for years of service
- Public recognition (newspaper article, recognized at a public event, announcement at meeting or radio, etc.)
- Opportunities provided for advanced education (i.e. we'll pay your way to go to...)
- Opportunities for social interaction (i.e. leader's banquet)