

4-H Builds Leadership

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — What do popcorn magnate Orville Redenbacher, singer Reba McEntire, baseball star Johnny Bench, Ford Motor Company chairman Harold Poling, and Vice President Albert Gore, Jr., have in common?

All of these leaders were 4-H members.

During Pennsylvania 4-H Week, March 15-21, kids and parents can learn more about the range of opportunities available through 4-H programs.

Youth in 4-H learn and grow by completing projects in activities they're interested in, ranging from archery to woodworking. "Along with practical skills, 4-H'ers acquire good work habits, responsibility, business skills, cooperation and sportsmanship," says Dr. Robert Lewis, professor of 4-H and youth development in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Volunteers

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Millie Love of Blair County has made working with youngsters a way of life. She has been a 4-H volunteer for more than 39 years.

"I enjoy working with people, especially young ones," says Love. "They're eager to learn, and they're always entertaining to be around. To be at it as long as I have, you have to like it!"

Love is one of more than half a million adult volunteer leaders who work with 4-H youth nationally. These volunteers take youngsters on hikes, shuttle them to events, and share their interests. They teach kids how to run small businesses, raise animals and organize neighborhood cleanup projects.

"4-H clubs rely on adult volunteers for expertise, supervision and guidance," says Dr. Robert Lewis, professor of 4-H and youth development and state volunteer leadership coordinator in Penn

"By setting goals and making plans to reach them, 4-H'ers learn to make decisions and use time efficiently. In the course of each activity, they gain experience in public speaking by demonstrating their new skills and giving oral reports to their clubs."

"4-H not only helps youth grow personally, but also prepares them to help lead their communities," Lewis says. "It's hard for young people to develop leadership skills if they never get to lead. 4-H provides opportunities for them to practice being leaders in a variety of situations."

Each 4-H club elects officers who run meetings. These officers gain experience in public speaking, planning, conducting parliamentary procedures and other aspects of leadership. Seeing older youth taking the lead inspires younger 4-H members to become officers themselves. As activities and events are planned, younger members can practice leading by

serving on committees.

As they master new skills, club members between the ages of 13 and 19 can become teen leaders, helping younger 4-H'ers with projects and activities, giving demonstrations and one-on-one assistance where necessary.

"4-H also prepares youth for leadership by helping them understand how government works," says Lewis. "Members can take projects that explore government and politics at the local, regional, state and national levels. Many counties also have 4-H councils, made up of youth representatives that offer advice and guidance to adult 4-H leaders."

Since the late 1970s, Pennsylvania 4-H Week has marked the start of the new 4-H program year. In early March, local 4-H clubs enroll new members and prepare for the rest of the year. 4-H Week gives members a chance to celebrate and let others know what 4-H has to offer.

Build 4-H Organization

State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "Without them, 4-H wouldn't be able to offer such a wide range of youth programs.

"The estimated value of volunteer time and out-of-pocket expenses is about \$1.1 billion. Volunteers donate many hours each year to teach and prepare for club meetings. They drive an average of 300 to 400 miles for 4-H in their own cars and spend \$40 to \$60 annually on teaching materials."

Most volunteers are either parents of 4-H'ers or former 4-H members. Others just enjoy working with kids. "These volunteers are essential, not only because they help us make the most of scarce resources, but also because they are great role models for 4-H'ers," says Lewis. "They teach youth to get involved by being involved themselves."

People with limited time don't have to lead a club themselves to

support 4-H. Some adult leaders have meetings in their homes or provide transportation to meetings and events. Others help select and carry out activities and talk to people in the community about 4-H.

"The primary qualification is that they enjoy working with young people," says Lewis. "The relationship the kids develop with their adult leader is more important than the expertise they gain."

Pennsylvania 4-H week takes place March 15-21 this year. 4-H in Pennsylvania is coordinated by Penn State Cooperative Extension through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is open to all youths between the ages of 8 and 19, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability. If you are interested in enrolling your child in 4-H or becoming an adult 4-H volunteer, contact your county cooperative extension office.

4-H Shooting Sports Teach Safety, Sportsmanship

UNIVERSITY PARK (Center Co.) — With an estimated 200 million firearms in homes in the United States, it's more important than ever to teach youth about gun safety, says Earle Robbins, Tioga County extension agent and state shooting sports coordinator for Penn State Cooperative Extension.

"Many shooting deaths are accidental," says Robbins. "Teaching youth about gun and archery safety can save lives. This is the primary emphasis in all 4-H shooting sports programs."

About 100,000 youth in 33 states are enrolled in 4-H archery, air pistol, air rifle, .22 rifle, black powder rifle and shotgun sports. In Pennsylvania, about 1,715 boys and 496 girls participate in 4-H shooting activities.

Robbins works with 4-H'ers ages 8 through 19 in the shooting sports program. He also is a Pennsylvania Game Commission hunter-trapper education instructor and a National Rifle Association training counselor, certifying instructors in shooting sports.

"Youngsters in the program learn to always be aware of people around them when they're shooting and to treat every gun as though it is loaded," says Robbins.

"They learn to always point guns and archery equipment in a safe direction and to be sure of their targets and backstops before releasing the arrow or pulling the trigger."

In addition, participants learn about wildlife habitats and natural resource conservation. "Some of our 4-H'ers get involved in hunt-

ing, so we emphasize ethical hunting practices and respect for nature," says Robbins.

4-H'ers in the shooting sports

program also can participate in

county, regional and state competi-

tions. After graduating from the

program, they can become one of

the nation's 10,000 adult volun-

teer instructors.



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