

# ***4-H 101***



**The Basics of Starting 4-H Clubs**



# Dedication

*This handbook is dedicated to the memory of Andrea Ley Hutson who died September 4, 2003. In her role as Training and Communications Coordinator with the USDA/Army Youth Development Project at National 4-H Headquarters, CSREES, USDA, Andrea helped to acquaint hundreds of military youth professionals with Cooperative Extension 4-H and to help Extension 4-H professionals across the U.S. understand and appreciate Military structures and their youth programs. Andrea supervised the development of the 4-H 101 Curriculum and the extensive pilot training of the material with Extension and Army youth development personnel. It is because of her expertise and facilitative leadership that this curriculum and the training it supports are available to professionals who wish to deliver positive youth development opportunities through 4-H to the youth in their communities. Her gentle and caring spirit is reflected in the design and implementation of the training and will remain in the hearts of those who were fortunate to have worked with her in preparing it.*





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- E. I Have to Do What? Pieces to a 4-H Presentation, Iowa State University Extension Publication, Ames, Iowa



**T**his 4-H 101 Handbook is designed to be a general overview and resource guide for all youth development staff who are starting new 4-H clubs or working with existing clubs. It is designed to assist staff in merging the concepts and principles of effective youth development delivered in non-formal (out of school) settings with the management of a 4-H program, and specifically a 4-H club within an existing organizational structure.

This blending of youth development theory and program management skills assumes a background in the fundamentals of youth development programming in the non-formal setting. 4-H 101 will provide a brief review of some basic youth development principles that form the context for the organizational procedures covered in this handbook. If these principles are new to you, you will need to follow up with a more in depth course. Two easily accessed options are available. Training teams in 39 states and two U.S. territories, trained through funding from CSREES/CYFAR, are prepared to conduct 40 hours of basic youth development training through a course entitled Moving Ahead: Preparing the Youth Development Professional. Your state 4-H office will know how to contact these trainers and may also know of other training opportunities in understanding your role as youth development professionals. For those who have difficulty being away from the office for training, a self-study handbook, Youthworks Self Study Guides: A Performance Based Training Program for Youth Development Professionals, offers training to fit individual scheduling needs. (See bibliography for details).

Using the club delivery mode to reach youth has proved, over the course of the past 100 years, to be an effective avenue for youth development programming. It has the benefits of long term and consistent involvement and the ongoing relationship and support of peers and caring adults. The 4-H club has evolved from an agriculture focused educational format to its current role in providing urban and rural youth with the skills they need to transition into adulthood in today's complex society. If you are coming to this training from a youth serving organization outside the Cooperative Extension Service, it will be important to establish a working partnership with your 4-H agent and county Extension Office. Your county 4-H agent will be able to give you information specific to policies and procedures for the state and county in which you are located and can provide staff training and youth curriculum resources for your club members.

4-H 101 provides the organizational and management tools necessary to start and maintain 4-H clubs. It is divided into five themes; the purpose, history and structure of 4-H; developing life skills through the 4-H club; starting and maintaining 4-H clubs; supporting volunteer leaders; and recognition in and beyond the club.

Because every state has its own 4-H club guidelines, the material included in this manual focuses on common practices across states and provides references to sites for information specific to locale.

For purposes of this Handbook, the term “4-H Agent” will be used to refer to the extension staff person working with 4-H Youth Development. In your area that person may be called an Extension Educator, Extension Agent, County Agent, County Youth Development Specialist or some variation of these titles. All the terms identify the same basic position.

Because 4-H is the youth outreach arm of the state and county Cooperative Extension System, county 4-H youth development staff offices are usually located in the County Extension Office. For simplicity, this handbook will refer to these offices as the “4-H Office”.

For many 4-H Clubs, the club leader is a volunteer. The information contained in this handbook referring to volunteer club leaders is also applicable when a paid staff person is serving in that role.

