



# Leader Training Series

## How to Start a Berkeley County 4-H Club

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### Three Ways in Which 4-H Clubs Operate

- **Community-based**—An adult volunteer leader starts a 4-H club in his or her neighborhood with some local children. The club selects one or more projects. The group usually meets about once a month or more often at the leader's home, school, church, community center, Berkeley County extension office, or other convenient location(s).
- **In-school/After School**—A teacher or another interested adult conducts a club meeting at a designated time during class. Activity periods or after school are also possible times. The teacher might select 4-H projects that are relevant to the class and subject(s) being taught, or offer a project "just for fun."
- **Other**—The 4-H Youth Development Program extends itself to all residents of Berkeley County. The 4-H office will help any individual, agency, or organization with resource material or consultation regarding youth development, within the limits of time, staff, and mission of the 4-H program.

### Getting Started

1. Read information about the 4-H Youth Development Program supplied to you. If you have nothing other than this sheet, obtain what's available from the Berkeley County 4-H office of West Virginia University Extension and/or visit our web site at <http://berkeleyextension.com> where you will find certain brochures and a leader training materials especially informative.
2. Begin by recruiting several (five or more is usually a good minimum number) interested, eligible children to join the club. Grade requirements for 4-H members are:
  - Clover Buds will be 6 years old by September 30<sup>th</sup> of 4-H year which is October 1 to September 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - Individual can join when he/or she is in 3rd grade and/or will reach their 9th birthday during the 4-H Year.

3. Organize your club at the first meeting. If convenient, you may want a separate session for parents. If not, certainly invite parents to the first organizational club meeting. Tell the parents that their help is needed. (4-H leaders are not merely baby-sitters!) Encourage parents to attend meetings and to become involved whenever and however possible as adult leaders. Have all adult volunteers complete the West Virginia University Extension Service 4-H/Youth Program Volunteer Application. (This form must be on file at the Berkeley County Extension office for all adult volunteers.)

It's usually best to make specific requests for help from individuals, based on their interests and abilities. However, under no circumstances should adult involvement in the club overshadow member participation!

4. What to do at the first meeting (or shortly thereafter):

A. Describe available 4-H projects to the members (those you're willing to lead). Ask members to select, or at least begin to think about, projects to be carried by the club. (Use the West Virginia Guide to 4-H Projects.)

B. Encourage members to choose or begin to think about a name for the club. (Refer to *Selecting a Name for Your 4-H Club*.)

C. Devise/approve a basic 4-H club constitution. (Refer to *Devising a 4-H Club Constitution*.)

D. Ask for nominations and elect officers for the club.

Depending on the size and type of club, typical officers might include: president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, reporter, and recreation leader. You aren't limited to these positions and also may not need all of them. Many clubs seem to operate fine with a president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer. (See *4-H Club Officers Make the Meeting*.)

E. Ask all members and leaders to fill out the appropriate registration forms, which the Berkeley County Extension office will provide for you. (See *Appendix B & C* for samples.) Be sure all are *complete*! You should deliver or send these forms to the Berkeley County 4-H office as soon as possible. This information is needed for these reasons:

1. Members and leaders are placed on a 4-H email list to receive regular 4-H newsletters and other important information.

2. As a tax-assisted organization, certain membership information is required for reports to the government.

3. Berkeley has a county-wide 4-H sponsor basic accident insurance coverage for enrolled 4-H members and Leaders.

F. As members join your club, give them a copy of *Welcome to 4-H! A guide for new 4-H members and their parents*. (See *Appendix E*.) Copies are available from the Berkeley County 4-H office or on our web site at <http://berkeleyextension.com>.

G. Decide on a *regular* club meeting schedule, which includes date, time, and place.

5. Obtain necessary materials for 4-H project(s), such as member and leader/project guides and project record books if necessary by sending your club order to the extension office.

6. If you want more members for your club than you have been able to recruit, let our office know. We can write news releases to help recruit additional members, or you can write one yourself. See *How to Write a News Release*.

Recruiting can also be done through the 4-H newsletter and other methods.

1. Keep in contact with the 4-H office. Feel free to ask for help or materials. The 4-H office is always a busy place, but we will do our best to help you promptly.

Remember to send Club Meeting Reports regularly. This keeps everyone informed of your club's activities and may be printed in the 4-H newsletter so other 4-H clubs will know what *your* club is doing.

2. Recruit co-leaders. At the very least, ask for parental support. SHARE the workload!

3. Review the main points of the most recent 4-H newsletter at club meetings by reading aloud so members will know what's going on in the total 4-H program. Encourage all members to participate in a variety of 4-H activities.

4. Encourage *parents* as well as members to read the 4-H newsletter.

5. Attend leader meetings, workshops, and forums. This will keep you informed of details about the 4-H program, and also provide an opportunity to share ideas with other 4-H volunteers and learn from other people's experiences.

6. Keep your leader information/orientation materials and other 4-H information, such as the 4-H newsletter, "on file" for future reference.

*Your decision to serve as a Berkeley County volunteer 4-H leader is sincerely appreciated!*

*The Berkeley County 4-H program could not exist without your interest.*

## **BERKELEY COUNTY 4-H IS EDUCATION FOR LIFE!**

### **Sources**

*Diem, Keith G. Ph. D., (2000) Affiliate Extension Specialist, Rutgers University*

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