

Volunteering In The Panhandle

Solutions Through Helping!

Provided By Your 4-H Extension Agents in Northwest Florida

November 2011 - January 2012, Volume 2, Issue 4

Letter from the Editor



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Happy fall to everyone. After a blazing hot summer and a brief introduction to beautiful fall weather, we are headed into the holiday season right around the corner. In this issue, we will all learn how to celebrate the holidays 4-H style with information from Heather Kent as well as get more tips on how to enhance your 4-H Club meeting experiences. Please refer to your county agent for the Florida 4-H Foundation during this transition period for all information necessary to understand the recent changes to our 4-H tax exempt status. As volunteers, we hope that everyone is getting involved and staying involved through our volunteer association. The website is <http://florida4h.org/volunteers/index.shtml> and we look forward to everyone participating in our upcoming Volunteer Forum in February. We will be posting more information soon, but it should be an exciting couple of days, so plan to attend if you can. Lastly, we would like to thank Howard Beck for all of his help with our newsletters for the

past year and wish him well in his recent retirement. Have a wonderful holiday season and a safe new year.

Five Tips for Successful 4-H Clubs



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Five Tips For Successful 4-H Clubs

1. Be Prepared – Children do not like chaos. Let's face it, we don't either. Although sometimes we may plan activities that seem chaotic, the key is that we did "plan" them. It is so important to plan activities, anticipate the challenges, and be prepared for them. This will get easier the more you do it and the better you get to know your club members.
2. Be Routine – Ok, so if children do not like chaos, parents do not like surprises. While it may be necessary from time-to-time to cancel a meeting or schedule an "emergency" meeting due to unforeseen circumstances, do not let this be your 4-H legacy.

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Use the tools that your 4-H agent provides to set up a schedule of regular meetings for your club and stick to it at all costs. If changes need to be made, make sure that families are aware with as much time to spare as possible. Also, if you tell your members that you are camping next weekend, but you don't intend to camp in certain weather conditions (ie – a sudden hot or cold snap, hurricanes, thunderstorms, or even a light drizzle) you need to make them aware of these things during the planning stages. This will cut down on possible disappointment later.

3. Have Fun – Although we always try to plan meetings and activities that are enjoyable, sometimes it's rejuvenating to do something that is just down right fun. Don't worry, the educational component may be masked, but it is there. For instance, plan a day full of bubbles, water balloons, and sprinklers to teach new activities for a healthy lifestyle, or plan a canoe trip to allow youth to practice sun safety, teamwork, healthy lifestyles, and appreciation for the environment. Allowing youth to plan a club movie night will teach them responsibility, teamwork, and organizational skills. This won't be an every month thing, but the occasional fun activity may be just what you and your club need. The possibilities are endless, and the results may astound you.

4. Involve youth in the decision making process – This can be tricky, and will be an utter disaster if you just walk in and ask, "What do you guys want to do this year"? Youth need some direction. Set some boundaries and be more specific in your questioning. Ask things like, "What do you want our service learning project to be this year? Who do you want for a guest speaker at our next meeting?" etc. This will help focus their ideas into useable information for you. Also, preparing two or three options ahead of time and allowing them to vote on them may be especially helpful in clubs comprised mainly of younger members. For example, if you are choosing a guest speaker for your next meeting which is supposed to be on money management, you can offer to arrange for a local banker, CPA, or financial planner to speak. Let the youth vote, and then try to arrange to speaker. When you send out a meeting reminder include who the guest speaker will be. In case you don't get their first choice of speaker, this will let them know ahead of time and will prevent the awkward moment that follows when a disappointed youth exclaims, "Aw man! I thought Mr. Johnson was coming!" right in front of Mr. Smith, your back up speaker.

5. Attend volunteer leader trainings – This is crucial. Life is incredibly busy for all of us, and trust me, your 4-H agent has other things that he/she could be doing the night of volunteer training too, but they have set aside that time for you, and have put additional time into preparing to help and support you through the training activities they have planned. Don't skip a training because you don't feel like going, you don't think you'll know anybody there, you forgot the dessert you were assigned, or you've already attended training on that topic before. Your agent has already thought of all of this, and is prepared to make the most of your time, and to help you feel comfortable. If you know you are going to miss a scheduled volunteer training, please let your agent know in advance, so he/she can forward you the materials or schedule an alternate time for your training.

How Will the New 4-H Tax Exempt Process Affect Your Club?



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Finally, after a long and arduous process of determining the best way to move forward with the Florida 4-H Foundation Tax Exempt Status, we have gotten notification that each chartered 4-H Club and affiliate are "officially" tax exempt through the Florida 4-H Foundation.

What does this mean for your club specifically? Here are a few answers to the most commonly voiced concerns from leaders and agents:

Will be able to keep our old bank account? No, each club will be asked to turn over funds to your county association and new procedures will be put into place for handling club expenses.



Will we still be able to buy things for our club “on the spur of the moment?” Yes, but in order for a leader or adult volunteer to be reimbursed for any expense, it will have to go through the association.

Who can or should be on the County Association board? It will vary for each county, but most counties will be hybridizing the structures between their advisory, expansion and review and foundation committees.

Overall, the best practices for transitioning into this new structure include patience, accurate record-keeping and communication with your agent. Even though this change is somewhat uncomfortable for some, ultimately, this will make a more cohesive Florida 4-H Program for everyone.

Celebrating the Holidays 4-H Style



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Most people love a celebration! While youth should have an opportunity to learn and share information about the important holidays and celebrations in their lives, celebrating specific holidays in a 4-H Club may exclude someone. Florida 4-H is open to all youth, between the ages of 5 and 18, regardless of gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, creed, or disability; however, do our celebrations always reflect that? Each year we become more and more aware of how diverse our “club, our community, our country, and our world” is becoming. In order to do that, we need to be aware of their traditions and culture and make sure that our traditions do not discourage, or even prevent them from participating. Some people, based on religious or personal beliefs, do not celebrate holidays or birthdays. That doesn’t mean that holidays have to be forbidden.

Why be inclusive?

1. Not only is it the moral and ethical thing to do, it’s mandated- we are open to all youth, ages 5-18. Our membership should reflect the demographics of our community or county. Being inclusive helps us become more diverse. More than 82% of Americans identify themselves as

Christian, so for most people, it is easy to forget that there are other holidays besides Easter and Christmas. Even within the Christian religion, these holidays are celebrated differently. Recognizing the variety of celebrations of Christian and non-Christian holidays is essential to the success of having people feel valued.

2. Learning about other cultures is part of good citizenship. Our youth are growing up in a more diverse world than ever before, so knowledge of other cultures and traditions is essential for them to be successful in their communities and in the workforce. It would be to their advantage to learn about other cultures.

3. Learning about differences helps us see commonalities- When discussing this topic it is easy to focus on the differences, but one thing is common: holidays and celebrations are important in every part of the world, and in every culture. As we learn about others, we also learn more about ourselves.

Tips for Inclusive Celebrations:

1. Create an atmosphere that seeks to educate not discriminate. Learning about other cultures is part of good citizenship. You can make learning about cultural celebrations a part of your club’s citizenship work. Besides, it’s fun!

2. Be accurate and sensitive. Avoid asking children to be the experts on their religion or holiday celebrations. Children may be embarrassed to share information about their own religious practices or family traditions, and in addition, they may not have accurate information to share. Provide children with “expert” information by providing books and other media on the topic, or asking a member from the community to come and visit. Also, make sure that whatever the celebration, children have the option to not participate and have a reasonable/suitable alternative.

3. Avoid Stereotypes. Keep in mind that everyone celebrates holidays differently, even members of the group. Be aware that some holiday customs contain stereotypes. Point out these stereotypes to children and work together to come up with ideas for sensitively counteracting these stereotypes. Avoid treating certain holidays as “regular” ones, and others as “special” ones. Some cultures have been reduced to being “brought out” only on holidays, which presents a one-sided and “exotic” view of the culture.

4. Look for commonalities or themes. By connecting holiday themes, you show children that holidays are an expression of cultural and religious pride, and help them understand the commonality of certain human feelings, celebrations, etc. Look at the way lights are used in the holidays of Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Santa Lucia Day and Diwali. Liberation is the theme of holidays such as the Fourth of July, Passover, Cinco de Mayo, Juneteenth and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

5. Be constitutionally appropriate. Keep in mind that religious holiday observances, if held under 4-H or Extension auspices, violate the First Amendment's separation-of-church-and-state mandate. While recognizing a diverse group of holidays validates children and their families, schools must be careful not to favor one religion over another – or religion over non-religion. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions, the Buddha, among others, that are part of a religious tradition is permitted as a teaching aid, provided such symbols are displayed only as an educational example of the culture and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature. They may not be used as decorations.

Who is Your Hero?



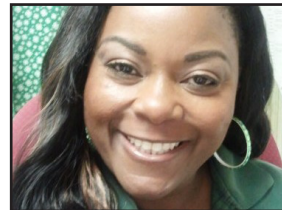
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People have someone they look up to, that they respect. Many people have someone they call Hero.

November 11 was Veteran's Day, and on this holiday, we paid tribute to the men and women who have worn the uniform of the United States Armed Forces. We honored military members who have risked their lives to preserve the freedoms of our Nation and the families who support them. Yes, the families of military members are Heroes too. As we approach the remaining holidays let's remember the Young Heroes. The youth who may have a parent, grandparent, sibling or other close family member deployed or getting ready to deploy.

There is a special gift you can give these youth and it only takes a little time - send them a card thanking them for their service, invite them to a 4-H event, host a holiday party for them, or just talk to them and say thank you. Think what this could mean to those youth – knowing that someone cares and appreciates their service. You may be providing just what they need to help them get through the deployment. These youth serve year-round. Let's remember to support them not just around the holidays but every day. Please let us know what you are doing to help your local heroes so we can capture the information and report it for our OMK Grant to keep support coming to us to help our young heroes in the future. Send what you are doing to Janet Psikogios, Northwest Region OMK Regional Coordinator, janetp@ufl.edu, 850-784-6105 (phone), 850-784-6107 (fax), 2728 East 14th Street, Panama City, FL 32401.

Volunteer Weekend Training



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Save the Date Alert

A great networking and training opportunity is coming and you will want to be there.

What's coming?

The Northwest Florida 4-H Volunteer Training is coming your way early 2012. This event is also open to volunteers outside of the NW district.

What are the dates?

Mark your calendar on February 17-18, 2012 as 4-H Volunteer Training.

Why would you want to attend?

Having great volunteers help to make the 4-H program a success. One way to help our volunteers is to provide training opportunities. You will have a great time networking, learning, getting great ideas, and being affirmed and refreshed.

Where will this training be held?

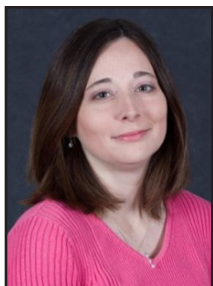
4-H Camp Timpoochee in the lovely Bay County (<http://florida4h.org/camps/timpoochee.shtml>)

Who do you need to contact?

Your local 4-H Agent is your point of contact (<http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/>). A registration packet will be sent to them real soon. If your 4-H Agent is not in the NW district (Escambia to Jefferson counties), she/he will need to contact an agents in the NW district to get the information. You must register through your county office.

We hope to see your face in the place because you remembered to save the dates of February 17-18, 2012. To learn more about being a Florida 4-H volunteer, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office and visit <http://www.florida4h.org/energizevolunteers/Default.aspx>.

Risk Management and What it Means to You



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We all understand that risk management is important because it ensures a safe environment for our youth and adults. But lets face it, sometimes we are just toobusy planning our events to think about. Well, let's break down risk management so that we can understand it better and hopefully do a better job of it.

Risk Management is the process of protecting assets by minimizing the potential for negative outcomes. Areas of risk include people, property, financial, and reputation. So, how do we protect these things in our 4-H programs? We start by analyzing our risk associated with a specific activity. Once we identify possible risks, we employ risk management strategies to minimize potential risks. There are four strategies we can use: Reduce, Avoid, Transfer, Assume. Most often you will use a combination of these strategies for any given event. After the event,we review and evaluate our

risk management plan. It takes everyone to manage risks in the 4- H program - youth, volunteers and staff!

For more information on Risk Management in the 4-H Program, go to edis.ufl.edu and search "risk management". There are several good publications as well as a pre-event planning guide and matrix.

References: Pracht, Dale; Norman, Marilyn; Fogarty, Kate; Hink, Jean. 2010. Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work. <http://edis.ufl.edu>.

How Big is Your Carbon Footprint?



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Most of both naturally produced and man-made Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) is absorbed by the ocean, forming carbonic acid. While some of this CO₂ is consumed by organisms in the water during photosynthesis, a small proportion remains in the water. Increased CO₂ in the atmosphere has led to decreasing alkalinity of seawater. Studies have shown that this has adverse impacts on marine

organisms, including: the reduction of survival of larval marine species, including commercial fish and shellfish, reduced ability of marine algae and free-swimming zoo-plankton to maintain protective shells, and a decrease in the rate at which reef-building corals can produce skeletons. You can help protect Earth's water quality by taking simple steps to reduce your carbon footprint (the amount of carbon you are responsible for producing each day). Simple Steps include:

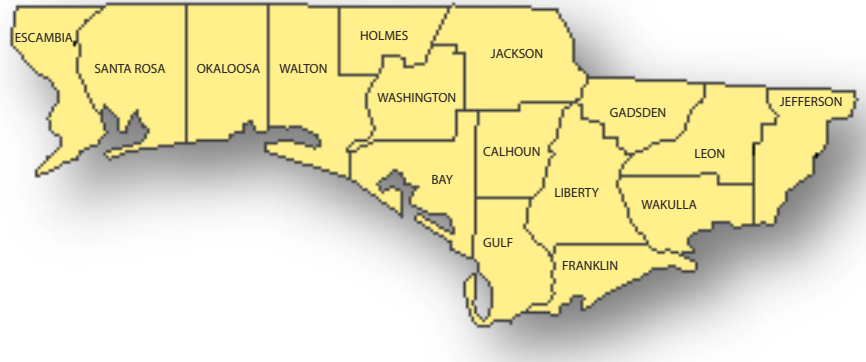
- Turning the lights off when leaving a room.
- Carpool
- Using cold water when hot water is not required
- Use a reusable water bottle with tap water for drinking
- Unplug appliances that you do not use frequently

· Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

If you would like to calculate you're the size of your carbon footprint, visit <http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>.

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In Northwest Florida*

