

New  
Jersey **4-H**

## Leader Training Series



### Promoting 4-H and Getting More Members for Your Club

### Happy Members Are The Best Promotion

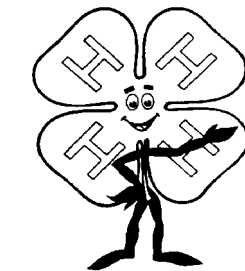
### Welcome New Members

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Educational Design, 1990, revised  
1994*

Many national and local surveys have found that the public has heard of 4-H but doesn't understand it or realize that it exists in their own counties. Due to its history long-rooted in rural areas and traditional agricultural and home economics projects, many people aren't aware that 4-H is this and much more. Its focus is on youth development.

One way your club can help to promote 4-H and get more members for the program (and your club) is to make promotion one of its goals. Following are some things to consider in promoting 4-H, and some easy ways your club can help:

Word-of-mouth is very powerful! If your club's members are happy with their 4-H experiences, they'll probably tell others about it. Unfortunately, if they're unhappy they will likely tell even *more* people! This is a sad but true phenomenon of human nature.

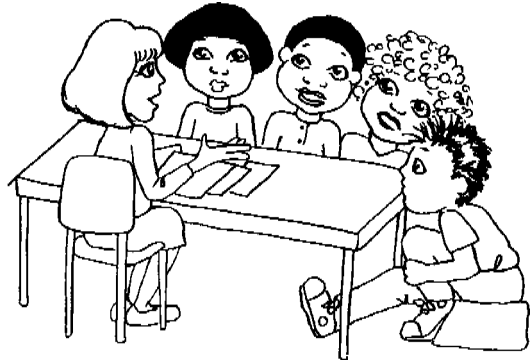


When new members first attend your club meeting, be sure they are greeted and made to feel part of the group. Members may not know each other, especially in county-wide 4-H clubs. Many children are shy and have a difficult time in getting acquainted. Take the initiative of introducing them and their parents to the club and its activities. Regularly include group interaction activities at club meetings so *all* members can get to know each other better. If new members don't feel comfortable with the club fairly soon, they probably won't be back. And they may not be happy!

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## Set a Positive Example

Your club and its members must set a positive example. For your message about 4-H to be believable, your club and its members must practice what your promotion preaches. Don't oversell 4-H. Tell about the big picture of 4-H but be honest



about your local version (club). Members should be examples of kids who are neat and well-behaved. However, don't expect "perfection." Kids must still be kids! Tell the story of what and how much members have *learned* from being in 4-H. After all, learning is the true goal of 4-H.

## Promotion Tips

### **Promotion lets people know about the good *and* the bad.**

Be sure your club is telling a *positive* and accurate story about 4-H. Otherwise, more people may learn something unfavorable and not the good of 4-H. What people think (their perceptions) is often more influential than the truth. Therefore, your promotional efforts should be positive and polished. It need not be perfect, but avoid shabby, poorly planned and conducted promotion efforts. For instance, make sure posters are neat and complete. A professional artist isn't necessary, but club members should take their work seriously!

**Promotion should happen all of the time.** Although special 4-H promotional events are held, this is only part of a total effort. Promotion is a *continual* process. The public today is a different one tomorrow. This is because people move. Also, what wasn't important last month may be today. If you stop telling your message, you're missing people who may now be listening.

**Promotion should use different channels.** People have many senses. The more senses that are used, the easier learning occurs. For people to learn about 4-H more easily, vary the ways you promote 4-H. Use sight, sound, and other senses where possible.

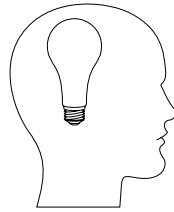
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Best yet, use a combination. Make posters, send announcements to radio stations and newspapers, place a display or bulletin board in a prominent location, etc.

**More promotion isn't always better just because it's more.**

Sometimes people think that, to improve a situation, just do more than you're doing now. But what if what you're doing now isn't good? Doing more of it will just make matters worse. This is very true in promoting 4-H. If what is being said about 4-H today and the way it's being presented isn't accurate, more of it will certainly do more harm than good. Helping to change the message in this case is more beneficial than encouraging promotion of an inaccurate image of 4-H. Never attack. Instead, be positive.

**Be Creative!**



Because people today are bombarded by all sorts of sensual stimuli through television, radio, computers, etc., they can easily become bored. They expect to see, hear, and try new things all of the time. Use this idea to your advantage! Try a new way to promote 4-H! Be unique and get noticed!

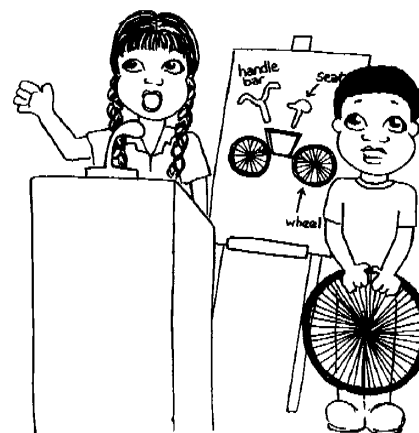
**Some 4-H Promotion Ideas**

Here are a few ideas to promote 4-H in your area. Use and adapt them as needed. Remember, *be creative!*

- "Tell a friend about 4-H." Suggest that members tell their friends about 4-H and encourage them to join a 4-H club.
- Participate in National 4-H Week, county 4-H week, or other special promotional campaigns in your county.
- Wear 4-H jackets, buttons, T-shirts regularly—to school, club meetings, shopping, etc.
- Conduct community service projects regularly. Not only is this good for the community, it's also good public relations for 4-H.
- Send announcements about your club's activities to local newspapers and radio and television stations. This is a good job for a club secretary or reporter, with the help of an adult. Refer to *How to Write a News Release*.

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- Hold a club open house for current and new members and parents, and others, such as reporters, local government officials.

- Conduct a 4-H poster-making party/contest and put the best posters in public places (with permission). Be sure to include the 4-H name and how to join 4-H (including phone-number) on posters and displays, and in other promotion, too.



- Send thank-you letters from your club to groups and individuals who have helped 4-H and your club.
- Purchase and donate 4-H placemats for use in local restaurants.
- Arrange for members to give 4-H public presentations at school, in libraries, and to community groups.
- Encourage your members to participate in community functions, such as parades, as a 4-H club. Display a 4-H banner. Better yet, create a special banner just for your 4-H club.

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