Opportunities for 4-H Volunteers

Congratulations on accepting the role of a 4-H Volunteer! As you learn more about the 4-H Youth Development Program, you will find that volunteers are valued as important resources. The 4-H program provides many opportunities that will not only help in your role as a volunteer, but may also assist in your personal or professional life.

Following is a summary of 4-H volunteer opportunities. The 4-H Motto is meant for you as well as for 4-H members as you take advantage of these opportunities “To Make the Best Better.”

County 4-H Volunteer Training

Every county offers training for 4-H volunteers involved in the program. This may take the form of a county-wide volunteer leader forum, local training in small groups, or one-on-one training with a paid 4-H staff member or volunteer trainer. To take advantage of county volunteer training means meeting with other volunteers in the county and learning through informal sharing and workshops.

A variety of other county opportunities are available for 4-H volunteers. *(See The 4-H Volunteer Role Right for You.)*

Leader Forums

Volunteer Leader Forums draw 4-H volunteers from throughout the state to take part in educational workshops, special activities, and sharing. The cost is minimal; scholarships are often available.

State 4-H Association

The State 4-H Association works with the NJ Department of 4-H Youth Development to provide input on the direction of the 4-H program at the state level. This group sponsors the and

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provides support for a variety of activities. This group is comprised of two volunteers from each county, four youth representatives, two collegiate 4-H representatives, and several ex-officio members.

**State 4-H Project Advisory Councils**

Many project areas have state advisory councils that recommend rules and policies, as well as plan, conduct and evaluate educational events. Most have designated, voting representatives from each county, but meetings are open to anyone interested in attending.

**Volunteers to Assist with State and Regional Events**

Volunteers are always needed for special activities, as well as ongoing programs. State 4-H activities may include: advisor to the NJ 4-H State Teen Advisory Council, chaperone to south Jersey Teen Conference, Judge for State 4-H Presentations, overall assistant for state 4-H horse and other animal project events, and other educational activities.

All volunteers need to be able to communicate with children, and understand the philosophy of 4-H and member recognition. Depending upon the event, volunteers may need to be skilled in the subject matter of the event. Overnight activities require volunteers to complete either the 4-H volunteer appointment process or the 4-H Adult Overnight Agreement/Release form.

**NJ 4-H/Japanese Exchange**

Each year 4-H families open their homes to Japanese teens who stay with them for one month or one year. County volunteer coordinators are needed to recruit and train host families, as well as oversee the actual exchange. There may also be opportunities to be a chaperone to Japan.

**Northeast Regional 4-H Volunteer Leader Forum**

The goals of this leader forum are to give volunteers an opportunity to develop skills that will help them in their role within 4-H. Each year, one state in the northeast region of the United States serves as host for the leader forum, usually held over a weekend in September or October. Volunteers attend from all Northeast states. Partial scholarships are available at the state level; some counties also offer financial support.

Although opportunities vary from year to year, chaperones are
Chaperoning National Trips

needed for all youth trips. Selection for chaperones usually requires an application and interview, as well as completion of the 4-H volunteer appointment process or the 4-H Adult Overnight Agreement/Release Form. National 4-H trips may include: Citizenship Washington Focus, a week-long trip to the National 4-H Center to learn about government and leadership; National 4-H Conference, a week-long trip to the National 4-H Center to work in “consulting groups” and make recommendations to federal 4-H partners; National 4-H Congress, a leadership and community service conference held somewhere in the US; and project related trips, such, such as Eastern 4-H Horse Round-up, National 4-H Dairy Conference, or National 4-H Horticulture Trip.

Be sure to read your county 4-H newsletter to learn more about these and other 4-H volunteer opportunities. Your county 4-H office can provide additional information. Take advantage of these many volunteer opportunities to expand your world of 4-H beyond your county or project.

Reference:

Opportunities for New Jersey 4-H Teen Members, distributed May 10, 1988 to 4-H faculty and staff, by Rita Natale.