

Why 4-H Community Service?

"I pledge my hands to greater service...for my club, my community, my country, and my world" is recited by members at the beginning of every 4-H club. Think back to the last time you uttered those words. Did you think about the meaning of the words? Did you question whether you had made a noble attempt to live up to the 4-H pledges words? Most of us are guilty of not reflecting on the actual meaning of the words we have memorized.

You can play a key role in your 4-H club's community service by volunteering to be responsible for overseeing all assets of one or more community service projects that your club participates in this 4-H year. By giving leadership to the project and delegating responsibilities to other club members, advisors, parents, and/or community members you can make an impact not only within the community, but with your club by making meetings more fun and interesting, besides the new skills and friendships you will develop. You can help "make the best better."

Before You Begin...

All 4-H clubs are encouraged to perform at least one community service project per year. Look back at the types of community service projects your 4-H club has been involved in the last three years. Now ask yourself these questions...

- Did each year the club do a different project or have you repeated the project the last few years?
- Did everyone in the club participate in some way?
- Did you like the project?
- Was it fun or creative?
- What did the other club members think?
- Did they just do the project because the club voted on it after the advisor suggested the project?
- What did you like and not like about the project?
- What could you do to improve the project?
- Did you see the impact it had on the community or people involved?

How was the community service project organized?

- Where did the club get the idea for the project?
- Who decided on the project?
- Who planned the project?
- Who did the project?
- Who evaluated the project?
- Who reported the project to the community?
- Did the entire club participate? Was everyone - 4-H members, advisors, & parents involved?

Reflecting on past community service projects will help you and your club have a more meaningful project for this year. Remember to be able to “make the best better” it takes leadership from you and team work from the entire club.

You are the strongest link... to a meaningful community service project

You are the strongest link to your friends, your fellow members, your club, your advisors, your parents, and your community. By creating a fun, meaningful community service project that everyone can have an active role in you will help others build stronger skills while helping your community.

There are five steps for you to guide your 4-H club through when conducting a worthwhile community service club:

- Deciding on the type of community service project
- Planning the community service project
- Doing the community service project
- Evaluating the community service project
- Publicizing and reporting the community service project

Not only should you follow these five steps for success, but as the leader you should try to involve everyone in the different steps. Often adults are the major contributors to the idea, decision making, and planning. Youth are often mainly involved in the actual “doing” of the project. As a youth leader, you can delegate jobs to the other club members and adults so all are actively involved.

Let’s take a closer look at the five steps. Listed will be some ideas to make these steps work for your club. Remember to keep a notebook with all the details of your community service project to share with your club, parents, community members, and for your 4-H officer judging.

1. Deciding on the Perfect Community Service Project

A. Ideas:

- Ask every member to come with one new idea that would benefit the community
- Invite some community members who work with local organizations to speak with your club or ask them for ideas of what the community needs (ie. Hospice, Children’s Services, Family and Children First Council, PTO’s, Rotary, Lions, Hospital, Community Action, Health Department, City Council, Nursing Homes, etc.)
- Conduct a survey at a school, church, or at store/mall asking what are some issues and needs of the community
- Get ideas from the local media - newspaper, radio, television
- Look for ideas on websites such as the National 4-H Council at www.4husa.org, Make A Difference Day at www.makeadifferenceday.org, Youth Service America at www.ysa.org, and/or Points of Light
- Look at your club’s interest and how their talents can be used best
- Don’t forget to look at resources available to your club -money, time, tools, etc.
- Consider the amount of time to complete the project
- Brainstorm ideas with your club - write members’ ideas on paper to share with club

B. Deciding on the Project:

- List projects on large paper or poster board
- Have members vote on top two or three projects by giving them five colored sticky dots to put on their favorite ideas - members can use all five dots to vote on one project or vote on five different ideas. Narrow it down to the top two or three "dot" getters and then decide which will work for your club.
- List projects' benefits and challenges. Decide from your list which would fit your club's needs best. Time, resources, dates, money, or equipment needed may factor into the club's decision.
- Remember a good project meets the needs of the community according to the "Make a Difference Day" program.

2. Planning the Club's Project

A. A community service project committee should:

- Meet separately from the regular club meeting. The committee can meet before or after the club meeting or on another date.
- The committee should be made up of a few members and one advisor.
- The committee should bring an outline of work to be done on a calendar for the club.
- Have space on the work sheets/calendar for club members to sign up for various duties.
- At the 4-H club meeting, the committee should give the members the calendar and ask for volunteers for the various work assignments. Make sure everyone is involved. Many assignments will take more than one person.

B. Planning considerations:

- How many volunteers will you need for the project?
- Who is available to help on the day of the project?
- Remember to include adults.
- Assign groups with a leader for the various jobs - gathering supplies, money, transportation to the event, refreshments, publicity on the radio, newspaper, television, and contacting any agencies involved (including safety people - police, nurse, etc.).
- Do you need an added insurance policy on members involved in your project?
- Do you need permission forms or medical histories' of participants in case of an emergency?
- First aid kits on site.
- Do the 4-H members have permission to ride with an adult or another teen member?

C. Organization? "Who's on first? Who's on second?"

- Does every volunteer know - what they are responsible for?
- Do the volunteers know what time?
- Do the volunteers know who is in charge?
- Do the volunteers know who to ask or where to find things?
- Do the volunteers know where they are going?
- Do they know when they will finish? This especially for youth who may need a ride from a parent.
- Did you write a list with all the tasks and volunteers responsible to share with each participant?
- Do you have a list of phone numbers - members, adults, emergency, organization, etc.?

3. "Doing" the Community Project

It's time to do the project - let the fun begin:

- If all the details with "who, when, what, where, how" have been given to all the participants, then you are ready to let the fun begin.
- Take a copy of your plans with who is responsible for what to the project with phone numbers. Sometimes the best laid plans can go astray.
- Have a cellular phone on hand, with telephone book, and numbers.
- Bring any permission forms and medical forms with you to the project. Have a back-up person (adult) be responsible for these papers. Leaders are should appoint a person to take care of any medical emergencies (only calling 911, not treating).
- Begin on time. End on time.
- Remember to clean up any trash from the project area. Respect the area.
- At the end, tell everyone they did a great job. Thank your helpers.

4. Evaluating - Were you the strongest link?

A. It is important to take time with all those involved to look at the overall project:

- Evaluation can be done through - group discussion, writing a journal or news article, or a survey of the participants

B. Reflect on:

- Did everyone have a role?
- Did everyone follow through with their assignment?
- Was the time frame adequate to complete the project?
- What changes would you recommend if your club was going to do a similar project?
- How were your supplies, money, resources, or refreshments?
- Who benefitted from the project?
- Was it fun?
- Was it creative?
- Did you enjoy doing it?
- Did club members and adults think others benefitted from he overall project?
- Did the club publicize the success to the community?
- Did you consider applying for an award, like Make a Difference Day?
- Would you recommend the project for others?

5. Reporting - Don't Be Shy

Report your success(es)

- Inform the local media what your club accomplished - "who, what, when, where, why, how"
- Have someone taking pictures for news stories or future publicity. Pictures for your 4-H Historian book and news reporter book would be a plus.
- Assign several club members to tell community leaders about your project - 4-H Extension Office, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanas, PTOs, City Council, Community Boards, and elected officials, etc.
- By sharing your ideas with others, your project may grow to other areas or more people will become involved in the future.
- Have a committee to send thank you's to anyone who helped your club make this project a success.

Did your Community Service Project incorporate the five-step process?

1. **Decision Making** - deciding on a project
2. **Planning** - all members involved in outlining the details of the project
3. **Doing** - all members involved in stages of the project
4. **Reporting** - members inform the newspaper, radio, television, public officials, and Extension Educators of project. Photos. Document for future.
5. **Evaluating** - members discuss or write suggestions for improvements, changes, and impact of project for community and themselves personally

If your team members were all involved with the different five-steps, then you are a winner!

☆☆☆ **SUCCESS is spelled:**

If you have been able to organize a meaningful community service project that your club members have had fun participating in, then ...

YOU are the strongest link to your community!

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