



2025-2026
Member and Family
HANDBOOK

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Orange County

4-H CLUB YEAR

Activities/Programs by Month

Our Program year runs October 1st-September 30th

SEPTEMBER

Archery - Beg. & Int.
Horse Bowl Practice begins
Awards Application Open

OCTOBER

National 4-H Week
County Club
STEM Club
Teen Council
Achievement Celebration
Halloween Party
Livestock Learning Nights

NOVEMBER

County Club
Teen Council
4-H Fun Nights
Green Minds, Bright Futures Series
STEM Club
Volunteer Orientation

DECEMBER

County Club
Teen Council
4-H Fun Night
STEM Club

JANUARY

County Club
Teen Council
4-H Fun Night
STEM Club
Youth Sewing

FEBRUARY

County Club
Teen Council
4-H Fun Night
STEM Club
Youth Sewing

MARCH

County Club
Teen Council
Cloverbud STEM Day
STEM Club
Public Presentations
Dog Program Begins

APRIL

County Club
Teen Council
4-H Fun Night
STEM Club
Dairy Bowl

MAY

County Club
Teen Council
4-H Fun Night
STEM Club

JUNE

County Club
Teen Council
Engineering Challenge
4-H Fun Night
STEM Club
Dairy Explorers

JULY

Project Judging
Fair

AUGUST

NYS Fair

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF 4-H

Please take a few minutes to review the information found in this Member and Family Handbook. The handbook will help you to better understand the unique educational and social opportunities that 4-H can provide for your whole family.

Sitting as a family and reading this guide together can help you and your children. This is the first step to achieving the full benefits of the 4-H Youth Development Program in Orange County.

4-H Mission

4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

What is 4-H?

4-H is a youth development program that focuses on helping young people build skills in a variety of areas, such as agriculture, science, leadership, and healthy living. The name "4-H" comes from the four values the program aims to develop in its participants: Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. These values represent:

- **Head:** Managing, thinking, making good decisions.
- **Heart:** Relating, caring, and sharing with others.
- **Hands:** Giving back and working on community service projects.
- **Health:** Living a healthy, balanced life.

4-H is typically associated with rural and agricultural activities, but it offers many opportunities in urban and suburban areas as well. Participants engage in hands-on learning through various projects, from animal care and gardening to robotics, art, and leadership. It's supported by local, state, and national partnerships, including cooperative extension services in the United States.

Orange County 4-H is the youth development component of Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County. In New York, 4-H is part of the Cornell University Extension System. At the National level, 4-H is under the leadership of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Visit the following websites for more information about the history of Extension and how 4-H reaches youth worldwide.

<https://www.nys4-h.org/>

<https://4-h.org/about/what-is-pyd/>

<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/fy-2019-4-h-name-emblem-use-guide-20191108.pdf>

<https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension>

What do the Four H's Stand for?

Head, Heart, Hands, and Health are the four Hs in 4-H, and they are the four values members work on through fun and engaging programs.

4-H Pillars

- **Civic Engagement** - Encourages youth to become active in their communities through service projects, leadership roles, and by addressing local issues.
- **Healthy Living** - Focuses on both physical and mental wellness, teaching skills in areas like fitness, nutrition, cooking, and stress management.
- **STEM** - Fosters curiosity and hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering, and math through projects in robotics, coding, conservation, and more.
- **Agriculture and Sustainable Food Systems** - Connects young people to the sources of their food and encourages sustainable farming practices, urban gardening, and understanding of food systems.

These pillars provide a framework for 4-H, enabling young people to participate in a variety of hands-on projects. Members can choose to specialize in one area or explore multiple themes within the pillars to develop new skills, build confidence, and become active, well-rounded leaders.

Please click [here](#) for more detailed information on the 4-H Mission Mandates.

4-H CLUBS

A 4-H club consists of at least 5 children and 1 adult volunteer leader, called an organizational leader. Many clubs have additional adult assistant leaders and/or project leaders.

The 4-H Club's goal is long-term youth development, which encourages its participants to learn life skills that will help them grow into healthy and productive citizens. A 4-H club is an informal, educational youth opportunity, which serves as a "hands-on" laboratory for helping youth grow in any or all of the following ways:

- Learning how to make thoughtful decisions
- Developing zest and skill for lifelong learning
- Learning positive socialization skills by working in a group and as part of a team
- Improving communication skills
- Learning and using practical technical skills
- Acquiring confidence and a positive attitude toward self
- Enhancing citizenship skills through community involvement
- Developing leadership and teamwork skills
- Exploring possible vocations and careers
- Learning to manage time wisely and set priorities
- Interacting with adults, who act as role models and have a positive influence on their lives
- Spending quality time with parents in a mutually rewarding setting

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge my HEAD to
clearer thinking.
I pledge my HEART to
greater loyalty.
I pledge my HANDS to
larger service.
I pledge my HEALTH to
better living for my club,
my community, my
country, and my world.

County Clubs

Discovery Den
Spark Lab
Bright Buds
County Club
Barnyard Buddies
STEM Club

County Activities/Experience

Public Presentation
Achievement Celebration
County Fair
Livestock Learning Nights
Sewing Labs
Green Minds Bright Future Series
Dairy Explorers
Horse Fun Nights
Teen Council
4-H Fun Nights
Horse Communications
Horse Bowl
Hippology/Judging

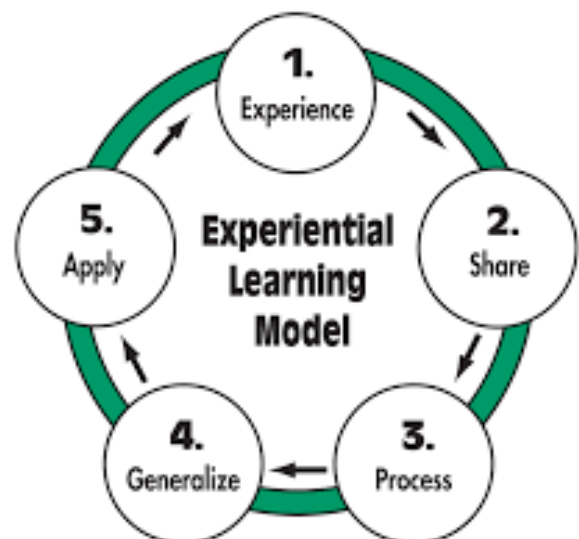
NYS 4-H Programs

Career Explorations
STAR
Capital Days
State Fair
eSports
Jr. Dairy Leaders

Please visit our website at www.cceorangecounty.org/4-H-Youth for more information.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The "experiential learning" concept occurs when youth participate in an activity, look back to reflect on the activity, draw conclusions or observations from the experience and relate that experience to future happenings in their lives. Through the experiential learning process, young people develop basic, transferable skills useful in real life experiences for the present and the future. This process is what makes 4-H different from other youth programs.



Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jones, J.E., "Reference Guide to Handbooks and Abstracts"
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MEMBERS

Youth participating in the 4-H Program can be either a member of a 4-H club or an Independent member.

Club Members participate in the club program and work on 4-H projects under the direction of the organized club leader(s). There are animal-focused clubs and general interest clubs. General interest clubs engage members in a broader scope of project areas.

Independent members are registered 4-H members who do not have a club or special interest program affiliation. They work on the projects of their choice at their own pace. They are encouraged to participate in county activities.

Membership/Age Policy

4-H Cloverbud Members - The New York State Cloverbud Policy specifies that a child must turn five by January 1 to be eligible to participate in the 4-H club program as a Cloverbud member.

4-H Member - Youth who are at least eight years of age by January 1st of the current club year should enroll as a 4-H member. Youth who have reached their nineteenth birthday before January 1st of the 4-H club year may not enroll as a 4-H member. [Here is the link to enroll.](#)

Award/Premium Eligible Member

For a member to be eligible to receive a premium at the County Fair and to qualify for awards, they must meet the following criteria.

- Enrolled by April 1st of the current year.
- Enter their 4-H Record Book & Activity Report **OR** the Yearly Member Record Book in the County Fair on 4-H Judging Day.
- Complete a 4-H Speaking Experience (county presentation, animal communications, club presentation, or an office chat) before the County Fair.
- Participating in one County Activity or County Experience

FEES

Enrollment is open from October 1st through April 1st. If youth are not enrolled by April 1st, they are still eligible to participate at the Fair, and earn ribbons, however, they will not be eligible to earn premiums.

A \$15.00 enrollment fee is required for each enrolled member with a maximum of \$25.00 per family. ***Fees are due at the time of enrollment.*** NO CHILD WILL BE TURNED AWAY FOR INABILITY TO PAY. Enrolled members for whom fees have not been paid or who have not had their fees waived will not be eligible for awards and will not earn premiums for their entries at the County Fair.

VOLUNTEERS

The adult leaders of 4-H clubs are volunteers. Adult volunteer leaders come from all walks of life. Following is a list of some Volunteer Opportunities:

- **Organizational Leader-** establish and maintain a club structure that supports 4-H Youth Development activities.
- **Project Leader**—share your skills, talents and special interests in a single project area. For example: clothing, dogs, rabbits, horse, bicycling, livestock, woodworking, photography, etc.

- **Activity Leader**-Help members plan for and participate in one or more specific activities the club has included in its yearly plan.
- **Short Term Volunteer**-Teach a special interest program, and/or assist a 4-H group with a special project.

4-H AT THE FAIR

Main Objective of the Fair

Participation in the fair is a vital aspect to the 4-H experience. It provides a place for learning, skill development, and personal growth. Engaging more youth means more young people are benefiting from these opportunities. While the total project count decreased slightly, the growth in youth participation represents a positive direction toward 4-H fair involvement. By focusing on engaging more members, particularly new and younger ones, we are investing in the long-term vitality of the program and ensuring that more youth gain the confidence, skills, and commitment that come from exhibiting at the fair.

Ribbons at the Fair

Members receive ribbons and/or awards for their efforts and level of mastery at county fair. The ribbons serve as a general definition of the **quality of the learning** by the member and the quality of the final project work. Both the member's knowledge and exhibit are important in awarding ribbons. Ribbons are given out according to the Danish System which evaluates each exhibit against a standard, not against the other exhibits. The Danish system promotes education and de-emphasizes competition. Judges are selected for their knowledge and concern for youth. Their decisions should be respected.

State Fair

The New York State Fair is a fantastic opportunity for youth to go beyond the county fair with their 4-H projects. Youth that have exhibited animals at either state fair qualifying shows and/or at county fair and have received a blue ribbon have the opportunity to go on to the state fair. Horse project youth are selected on a ribbon and points based system.

State fair also provides youth the opportunities to display what they have gained through participation in programs, projects, and activities while enhancing individual learning and skill development, learn and recognize standards for quality of project work and receive recognition for their accomplishments, and promote public awareness of the 4-H program.

On a historical note, 4-H has been a part of the New York State Fair since its inception. The Youth Building, also known as Pyrke House, was built in 1930 specifically to house 4-H exhibits and 4-Hers during the Fair. The building is named in honor of Berne Pyrke, then Commissioner of New York State Ag & Markets

STAYING CONNECTED WITH 4-H

Social Media

For all the latest, up to date information please check out Orange County 4-H on Facebook, Instagram, and SnapChat @orangecounty4h. If you are a 4-H member, make sure you request to join our private Facebook Group [Orange County NY 4-H](#). This is a group where we will be posting specific things for just our members.

Orange County Email List

E-mail is the most effective way of communicating with all our volunteers and members. Standard mail is reserved for formal invites only. The County 4-H office has a countywide electronic mailing list for adult volunteers, leaders, parents, and 4-H members. The purpose of this list is to increase communication between staff, the volunteers, and members. Email is used to update 4-H families on a regular basis of programs and activities that are occurring in the county.

Orange County CCE Website

Stay connected to all that is going on at Cornell Cooperative Extension and 4-H resources: www.cceorangecounty.org/4-h-youth

Not seeing what you're looking for?

We have several resources and trainings available for those who would be interested in starting up a 4-H club. To begin a club, an adult, over 21 must apply to be a 4-H Volunteer, complete the interview, background check and orientation process. Clubs only need a minimum of 5 youth between the ages of 5 and 18. The ages, number of youth in the club, meeting times and locations, and focus of the group is up to the leader(s) of the club. It is recommended that clubs have two or more leaders and parental involvement from the member's parents. If you are interested in becoming a leader, please contact the 4-H Office at 845-344-1234.