4-H Teaches Through Technology!

Technology, and the adoption of innovative technologies, has always been a key component of the 4-H Program. Most of you are familiar with the Computer Project and Curriculum. In fact, watch for the revised computer curriculum to be released nationally soon. There are many other opportunities and formats to include technology in your favorite 4-H program. Be creative! Think up new ways to use technology in your Club, your Camp, your county fair, your community service project, and your youth leadership event.

There are safe secure 4-H online opportunities for 4-H members and families to explore. You may want to try the 4HUSA.org, an interactive 4-H online community and a resource for 4-H information. Here you can connect with others to share stories and get new ideas. 4HUSA.org is a window into the planet’s largest and most exciting adventure for young people - 4-H. You are encouraged to join this community of youth like yourself, who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills through the wonderful and exciting 4-H programs. Registration on 4HUSA is free and open to anyone, youth and adult alike! And you don’t even have to be a 4-H member to register - so check it out, and soon you’ll want to join 4-H! Register Now! http://www.4husa.org/

Technological literacy is important, and 4-H has many ways to address those issues. Look for new GPS/GIS Geospatial Exploring Spaces Going Spaces curriculum created for 4-12 grades or the Robotics Exploring 4-H Robotics designed for 4-8 grades. Both are available to purchase from the 4-H Source book. Each of the 4-H districts has 4-H GPS skits available to check out and many of the local UNL Extension 4-H offices have kits too. Contact your local UNL 4-H office for more information.

Look for the new 4-H technology exhibits for the 2007 state fair. Many county fairs may also have their own beginning level 4-H exhibits you to get started with.

4-H youth may rent a LEGO Mindstorm kit for $25 for an eight week period. The LEGO Mindstorm kit contains a laptop computer and a robotics kit with sensors everything you need to complete the 4-H project manuals. To reserve your kit of for questions regarding this new 4-H Project, contact local UNL Extension Office or contact Brad Barker at bbarkert1@unl.edu for more information. All LEGO Mindstorm kits will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis.
Focusing on Foods - WHAT, WHERE AND WHEN TO DONATE

A popular community service project is to donate foods – either to a bake sale, food pantry, shut ins or a community event or location. While this is an excellent way to share with members of the community, there are also some food safety concerns.

When donating, some foods work better than others. Stay away from perishable foods such as meats, cream pies, and casseroles. If it needs refrigeration, you might look at other options. This includes eggs; eggs should not be sold at bake sales. Eggs are perishable and need to be refrigerated, not sitting out on a table for several hours. If your club members prepare a meal for a shut in, this can be done safely. A key food safety principle is to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

Non-perishable foods are your best option but these still require some food safety precautions. Baked items such as cookies, breads, and cupcakes go over well as donations. Remind the 4-H’ers that they need to wash their hands before, during and after they work with food, even foods that will be baked and can be stored at room temperature. In addition, this is a time to teach about kitchen safety and cleanliness.

Some 4-H clubs and individual 4-H members entertain at the local nursing home or senior center. This is an excellent way to share talents as well as spend time with senior citizens. These visits sometimes involve food. For instance, a 4-H club plays bingo with the residents at the nursing home and gives food for prizes.

There are a couple of cautions with this scenario. First, ask the nursing home administrator or activities director what food can and cannot be brought in to the facility. These facilities have food codes that they must follow. In some cases, commercially packaged individual sized items or fresh fruit may be allowed. Always check before you go to the facility. The other caution with this scenario: you have permission to bring commercially packaged individual sized items to the facility and your club chooses the small packages of raisins. This might not be the best choice for two reasons. One, many older people are not supposed to have dried fruit because of a condition called diverticulosis and second, the dried fruit gets stuck in the teeth.

Donating to a food pantry is another excellent community service project. Once again, stay away from donating perishable foods. Ask the food pantry director what foods are needed. At food pantries, there is usually an abundance of pork and beans, green beans and canned tuna while other needed foods are not on the shelf. In addition, do not donate outdated foods. This sounds like common sense and it is, but it is also a problem for food pantries.
Do any of these statements grab your attention or give you a certain message? We are bombarded by signs that carry messages like this everyday, so what makes certain ones catch our attention? Most people look at a poster for a very short time, in some instances only eight to 10 seconds. In order for a sign or poster to capture their attention, it must be: eye catching, simple and clear, and easy to read.

Most posters include two types of visual messages – lettering and art. Both play a part in the success of a poster and need to be given careful consideration! Keeping the number of words to a minimum is important, usually 4-6 for your main message. If you are using more than just a couple of words avoid using ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Capital letters can be harder to read than a combination of upper and lowercase letters. Letter styles should also be kept simple; but you may want to emphasize a particular word by using an italic or bolder style. Also, be sure to proofread lettering for spelling mistakes! A misspelled word will detract from the success of your poster.

The next important element of a poster is the art. It should have a single, dominant, eye catching element. This is typically a drawing, a picture, or some sort of graphic. Usually, the dominant visual feature should be at least 1/3 the size of the total poster area in order to be effective. Use of computer generated art should be used with caution. Some rules stipulate the use of clipart or other computer generated graphics. Good materials for creating poster art can include: paint, construction or other colored paper, and broad, felt-tipped markers.

Another key component of an effective poster is the use of color. It is one of the first things that will catch a viewer's attention. Bolder, deeper colors are usually better. This means you may want to avoid colored pencils or crayons that can sometimes look washed out. It is also more effective to pick two or three colors to use rather than to use a whole rainbow of colors.

Finally before you start to actually make your poster, it is important to recheck the information you want to put on the poster to be sure it is accurate. You may also want to do a small pencil sketch first to practice how you will arrange your final poster.
Grow…then smell, taste, craft, plant…and the cycle continues with this fun (yet educational!) activity for the budding gardener.

Go for the green with these garden education tips:

- To observe germination, place dried bean, zucchini, or corn seeds in closed plastic sandwich bags with a wet paper towel.
- Discuss different kinds of seeds and how they travel.
- To demonstrate root activity and how water and food moves through a plant, suck water through a straw. Transpiration can be observed by putting a sandwich bag over a leaf or a few leaves on a plant outside and checking it later to see any moisture formed inside the bag.

For a windowsill mini garden, start herb seeds in eggshells filled with sterile potting soil. (Use seeds of herbs that grow well from seed for this activity: chives, dill, oregano, lavender, basil, parsley, and cilantro are good bets). Nestle shells in an egg carton and place on a sunny windowsill that gets six or more hours of sunshine each day. Keep the soil moist but not soggy.

When plants are approximately 3 inches tall with at least two sets of true leaves, remove the shells and transplant the seedlings into 2” diameter pots. Label the pots with a permanent marker.

Water well when the soil feels dry to the touch, letting a little water run through the pots but don’t leave water in the saucers. Feed once a month with half-strength liquid fertilizer. Spray with a mild solution of soap and water if insects are a problem (no chemicals!). Move the herb pots outdoors in the summer in an area that receives good light but is protected from intense heat or wind. You can also set the pots in a garden, planting them with soil up to the rim. Water frequently.

In fall before the first frost, bring the potted herbs back indoors.

Then………try the following and share with a friend!

Make a batch of homemade paper to the pulp stage, place in a large plastic rectangular container and add 4 cups of water, several of one kind of herb seeds, and 4 Tbsp. white glue. Mix well. Submerge the papermaking screen and complete the process of making paper. Make into a card or cut into a garden pot shape, trim with ribbon or raffia, and include the following instructions:

Fill several pots with moist potting soil. Tear the card into several pieces and press a piece into the surface of the potting mix. Water thoroughly. Keep the paper and potting mix moist. Germination should occur within 2 weeks.
Growing the 4-H Family

Recruiting New Members

4-H is a family affair. 4-H helps develop family unity by providing an opportunity to do things together. 4-H families become part of a larger extended family. Parents and volunteers who take time to learn about and understand 4-H, are greater assistance to their child and the 4-H program. Members need parental encouragement to see project work through. Significant adults keep members focused on what they are learning, not just winning.

4-H is a program for youth and their families regardless of residence, economic, cultural and ethnic background. It provides educational programs for youth and adults based on practical skills like learning to learn, decision-making, public speaking, goal setting, job skills and more.

Membership is open to all youth ages 5 to 19 years old. Five to eight year olds are referred to as Clover Kids. The Clover Kids program is non-competitive.

4-H is the Youth Development program of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension, supported cooperatively by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, (USDA) United States Department of Agriculture and your local County Government.

Through Nebraska 4-H, youth will:
- Feel valued and empowered as a resource in the community.
- Practice effective problem solving and decision-making skills.
- Be environmental stewards.
- Demonstrate positive character and ethical behavior.
- Appreciate human differences.
- Have a strong sense of community and social responsibility.
- Contribute to positive relationships with family, peers and community.
- Demonstrate communication and leadership skills.
- Value lifelong learning.
- Feel the personal pride that come from achievement.

As a result, 4-H Project Work becomes an opportunity for reaching the child. Through project work youth “Learn by Doing,” develop into capable, competent and caring adults, as well as being taught desirable habits and attitudes. Members learn to help one’s self, which leads to helping others.

But mastering skills is not enough in today's world. 4-H teaches the learning how to learn through a process of goal setting and decision making: planning, inquiring, researching, applying, communicating and evaluating.

The true measure of success in 4-H will be found in the growth and development it brings to each individual member. Our 4-H programming concentrates on helping young people acquire life skills from their 4-H project work and experiences. Life skills are the ways we apply learned skills to real life situations. The key to "life skills" development is the individual having an opportunity to talk about and apply an experience to other aspects of their life. Example – How is following directions for a recipe and measuring ingredients correctly applicable to other experiences in life?

The Targeting Life Skills Model developed by Iowa State University Extension targets life skills in a bull’s-eye – aiming 4-H youth toward life skills development using the four H’s of the clover. A well-balanced 4-H experience for a youth will focus on all four quadrants of the model no matter what the project work is.
Invite 4-H Staff to a Club Meeting

This summer as your 4-H members meet and work on 4-H projects, please consider contacting me to attend a 4-H meeting. I would like to see your club in action and answer any questions you may have. I can also share information about county fair static exhibits and contests. Please contact Tracy Kulm at 441-7180 or email tkulm1@unl.edu. I look forward to hearing from you!