



# Hamilton County 4-H

**Welcome to 4-H** - the largest youth organization in the country! 4-H is a non-formal, educational program which stresses "Learning By Doing". There are nearly 2,000 youth from Hamilton County involved in 4-H!

In order to join 4-H, you must be in at least 3rd grade. You may continue in 4-H through the 12th grade or for 10 consecutive years, whichever comes first. Mini 4-H is a program available for grades K-2. To enroll in 4-H go to [in.4honline.com](http://in.4honline.com). You may also stop by the Purdue Extension Hamilton County Office located at 2003 Pleasant Street in Noblesville, call us at 317-776-0854 or visit our website at [www.extension.purdue.edu/hamilton](http://www.extension.purdue.edu/hamilton). The enrollment period is **October 1st through January 15th**. You must re-enroll every year.

## What is a 4-H Club?

One of the lines to fill out while enrolling is the name of your club. As a new 4-H'er you may not have joined a club yet. Each club sets their own meeting dates, places, and requirements. Some clubs focus more on certain projects, while others are very general. You should choose a club that fits your needs. You might want to find out which club your friends are in or invite a friend to join 4-H with you. It is your choice which club to join, feel free to call the club leaders or the Purdue Extension Hamilton County Office to help you decide.

At club meetings, you will learn how meetings are run, make new friends, learn more about 4-H, do community service activities, and participate in recreation. Each club will choose officers to help run the meetings. It is important to attend your local club meetings – you not only have fun and get to know the other kids in your club, but also because your club leader will check periodically on the progress of your project(s). Your club leader will check your project manual and sign your completed record sheet at the end of the 4-H year, signifying that you have "completed" your project work. It is your responsibility to get your records to your club leader to be checked by the date your leader specifies.

Once you are part of a club, you can pick up your project manuals at the Extension Office. Project manuals are used to help you learn about your project. You sign up for projects between October 1st and January 15th, and you have until the Hamilton County 4-H Fair, which is normally held in July, to finish your exhibit.

## What is a 4-H Project?

There are more than 60 projects to choose from in Hamilton County 4-H. We recommend taking only 1 - 3 projects the first year. 4-H members choose projects of interest to them. A 4-H project provides for individualized learning in a specific subject area. The actual project work is done by the member - usually at home. In order to exhibit at the county fair, you need to complete the required work in the project manual (requirements are found in the 4-H Handbook explained later in this letter) and prepare the specified exhibit. The exhibit represents a piece of what the member learned in the project that year, and is usually displayed and evaluated (judged) at the County Fair. There are specific guidelines and exhibit rules to follow – these rules are listed in the Handbook. Be sure to read them before starting your project. Parents should provide the "parent helper" role of offering encouragement and advice, but the exhibit should represent the member's skills and knowledge learned in the project. You then bring your completed exhibits to the fair where they will be judged. You will receive a ribbon based on the work you have done. The best exhibits will be eligible for competition at the State Fair in August.

In order to have completed a year in 4-H, you must complete at least one project. To be complete in a project, you must have completed the required activities, filled out the record sheet describing what you have learned, and it must be signed by your club leader.

## Does it Cost to Join 4-H?

The costs involved in 4-H depend on the projects you take. There is a \$25 materials fee per 4-H member, with a maximum of \$75 per family. This fee covers the cost of project manuals, mailings, and other materials provided by the 4-H Council. There is no materials fee for Mini 4-H members. Most clubs charge nominal dues to support the club. The only other cost to you is the cost of materials for your project. Some require many materials, others require hardly any. You are responsible for providing your own animal for animal projects.

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## Where Do I Find More Information about 4-H Projects?

### **4-H Handbook and Fairbook**

The revised Hamilton County 4-H Handbook is usually available in December. It contains descriptions of all 4-H projects and what is required to exhibit at the fair. It also tells general information about the 4-H program and rules specific to Hamilton County. The information in the handbook supersedes the information in the project manual since the Handbook is updated annually. The Hamilton County 4-H Fairbook comes out after the Handbook. It contains the current year's 4-H fair schedule. This tells what time you need to check-in your exhibits and when they will be judged. These are two valuable sources of information. This information can also be found on our website:

[www.extension.purdue.edu/hamilton](http://www.extension.purdue.edu/hamilton) on the Youth tab.

### **Clover Chatter Newsletter**

Another source of important information is the Hamilton County 4-H Newsletter entitled the Clover Chatter. In the newsletter, you will find any updates or changes to previously printed information. You will also find info about upcoming opportunities such as trips, scholarships, and 4-H Camp! From time to time, you may also receive mailings from the Purdue Extension Hamilton County Office containing information specific to your project, so don't throw away envelopes from Purdue University!

### **4-H Workshops**

The best source of information and guidance in a particular project is the project workshop. Many, but not all, projects will have a project workshop dedicated to helping you learn about the project. A listing of these workshops is included in the newsletter or can be found on the web site.

### **4-H Club Leaders and 4-H Members**

Your club leaders are another source of information and help. You can also ask Junior Leaders, who are older 4-H members who have signed up to help out the 4-H program. The staff at the Extension Office is also willing to help.

Hopefully this letter gives you a good idea of what to expect in Hamilton County 4-H. Please do not hesitate to call the Extension Office at 317-776-0854 or visit us online at [www.extension.purdue.edu/hamilton](http://www.extension.purdue.edu/hamilton) if you have any questions.

The enrollment period is **October 1st—January 15th** so don't miss it!!

We look forward to having you as a Hamilton County 4-H member!!

