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4-H.....I Pledge My Hands to Larger Service

Giving back to the community has always been a large part of the 4-H mission. 4-H clubs and members give thousands of hours to their communities each year. But why is this so important? Service learning projects help youth:

- Learn the value of helping others.
- Develop leadership, decision-making, problem solving, and communication skills.
- Learn the connection is between their 4-H project and life in the community.
- Develop a sense of being responsible for their community.
- Receive recognition for their efforts.
- Experience the world of work.

Carrying out service activities can strengthen a club because it:

- Boosts member commitment and involvement.
- Can involve families and youth in a joint activity.
- Builds teamwork skills.
- Shows the community how youth can be valuable resource.

Help 4-H members go beyond a community service project into a richer service learning project. What is the difference between community service and service learning? Service learning take community service to the next level by emphasizing both service and learning to create a more meaningful experience. An example of community service is conducting a food drive. In service learning the youth research hunger issues in the community and connecting with others to develop a plan to combat hunger.

Letting youth determine and plan service-learning projects related to their projects helps them develop leadership skills in their project areas. Here are a few examples: rake leaves for community members, maintain your local park equipment by painting or making necessary repairs or pick up trash throughout your community. The youth in your club will be able to think of many more once they explore the needs of their communities.

Being a part of a strong, supportive community is extremely important for families. Set aside time and one of your first club meetings to develop a plan for your community service projects. For additional community service ideas contact Kerry Elsen at the Buffalo County Extension Office at 236-1235 or kerry.elsen@unl.edu.