

Merrick County 4-H Welcomes You!

GET TO KNOW US

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We're excited to have you join the 4-H family in Merrick County! We hope the information you find in this welcome packet will assist you as you start your 4-H journey.

Did you know:

- 4-H is the largest out-of-school youth organization with over seven (7) million youth members!
- 4-H has been around over 100 years!

Your 4-H staff members are looking forward to getting to know you and your family and are ready to answer any questions you may have.



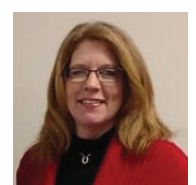
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WELCOME TO THE MERRICK COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM

Dear Prospective 4-H Family,

Welcome to 4-H! You have just inquired about one of the largest youth development programs in the nation. In Nebraska, 4-H reaches 1-in-3 age-eligible youth and engages youth and families in all 93 counties.

This welcome packet will give you an overview of the opportunities and resources available to help your family have an incredible experience in 4-H. Keep in mind that this is only an overview. Your best way to stay informed is to read the Merrick County Extension Newsletter. Your family will start receiving this free, quarterly publication once we receive your 4-H enrollment. In addition, consider connecting with us through social media!

The 4-H program is so large and the opportunities so vast that it can sometimes seem a little overwhelming when you are new. Just keep in mind that your family's 4-H experience can be tailor-made to fit your goals, schedule, and interests. That is one reason 4-H is such a great program for Nebraska families. You can be involved as a whole family, learning and growing together.

When describing 4-H to someone new, we often use the analogy of a "super department store." 4-H is like a "store" full of wonderful, fun, positive, educational programs. We have pretty much every type of workshop, project, contest, trip, conference, camp, or activity you could possibly want. Your family will choose what fits into your schedule and your budget. Club leaders and extension staff members are like the "greeters" at the front of the store to help you find what you need. We are here to answer your questions, so please don't hesitate to call.

The Nebraska Extension-Merrick County office is located at 1784 Fairgrounds Road, Central City, NE 68826. Office hours are Monday–Friday, 8:00 am-noon and 1:00–5:00 pm.

Again, welcome to the wonderful world of 4-H!

Sincerely,

Extension Staff



PARENT & GUARDIAN ROLES



4-H is a family program, a place where parents and their children can learn and grow together. In 4-H, you as the parent or guardian, are very important. You are always invited and encouraged to participate in all 4-H club activities. We recognize every family's schedule is different and you may not be able to attend every club function, but there are many different ways you can contribute to your child's 4-H group.

Your 4-H club leader will want to know about your interests and talents, and how you would like to support your child's 4-H group. Because 4-H has so many diverse experiences, we have discovered that every adult can find a parent volunteer role that matches their interests and the club's needs. Some possible helping roles include providing snacks/drinks, supplies, or other resources for a club meeting, helping members with their projects, chaperoning a club field trip, or organizing a club service project. Your club leader may have other suggestions, too.

As a parent or guardian, these are the following roles you need to fulfill:

- Provide transportation for your child to and from 4-H events.
- Help your child learn to recite the 4-H pledge.
- Attend 4-H club functions with your child whenever possible. Children ages 5-7 (Clover Kid members) should always have a parent or guardian attend meetings with them.
- Guide your child as they select a 4-H project and help them develop goals that are challenging, but also realistic. Encourage their project work by making it a family learning experience.
- If your child serves in a leadership role within the club, help him/her fulfill the duties of the office.
- Read the Merrick County Extension Newsletter so you will know the details of upcoming special events and dates. You will automatically start receiving this publication when you register as a 4-H volunteer or your child enrolls in 4-H. It can also be found on our website and social media outlets.
- If you have online access, visit the county 4-H website for the latest information and resources at: <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/merrick/educational-programs/merrick-county-4-h/>.
- The 4-H staff will provide a variety of classes, project workshops, and other fun 4-H learning experiences. Participating in these classes and workshops with your child will increase your understanding of the 4-H program, allowing you to help your child excel and take advantage of all that 4-H has to offer.
- Attend the Merrick County 4-H Achievement celebration as a family. Recognition always means more to children when their family is there to share it with them.

4-H FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is 4-H age? The age of a 4-er is determined by their age as of December 31 of the previous year. Their "4-H age" will determine what age group they will compete in at county fairs, state fairs and other 4-H events. To be a Clover Kid 4-H member, youth must be 4-H age 5-7. A regular 4-H member must be 8 by December 31 of the previous year.

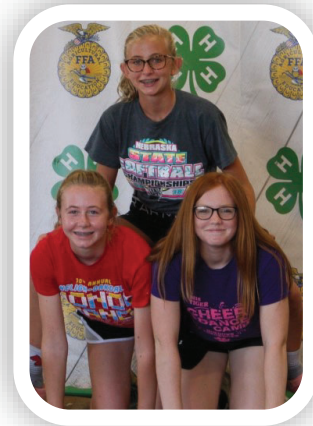
What do the four "H's" stand for on the 4-H clover emblem? The "H's" stand for: head, heart, hands, and health. Club members pledge their Head, Heart, Hands, and Health (the four H's) as they recite the 4-H pledge at meetings.

What is the 4-H pledge?

I pledge



my **head** to clearer thinking,
my **heart** to greater loyalty,
my **hands** to larger service,
and my **health** to better living,
for my club, my community,
my country, and my world.



What is the 4-H motto? "To Make the Best Better"

What are the 4-H colors? The 4-H colors are green and white.

How did 4-H begin? 4-H began in the early 1900's as Corn Clubs for boys and Canning Clubs for girls. Although the program has changed a lot through the years, it has always been a program designed to help children become productive members of their communities. The national 4-H program celebrated its 100th birthday in 2002.

Do I have to live on a farm to join 4-H? No, although 4-H began as a program for rural children, today 4-H is available for all children whether they live on a farm or in the city.

Do boys and girls attend different clubs? No, all 4-H clubs are open to both boys and girls.

How old do you have to be to join a 4-H club? Children can join a 4-H as an independent or with a club as soon as they are five by December 31 of the previous year and they can stay involved until their final year of eligibility. The last year of eligibility is 4-H age of eighteen (18). In addition, many colleges offer collegiate 4-H clubs, including the University of Nebraska-Lincoln!

What is the 4-H year timeline? The 4-H year runs from October 1 to September 30.

4-H FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Can we join 4-H at any time during the year? Yes, youth may join 4-H at any time during the calendar year. Some clubs may have their own established “cut off” date for accepting new members for the year. All 4-H youth must be enrolled with the Nebraska Extension Office by June 15 to be eligible to exhibit in the Merrick County Fair or any competitive 4-H events.

Are clubs organized by age divisions? Many 4-H clubs operate with children from a wide variety of ages, and some clubs have members who are in a similar age group. There are benefits of younger youth learning from the knowledge and example of older youth, as well as the leadership opportunities for older youth.

What are the age divisions for competitive events? A child must be at least eight (8) years old as of December 31 of the previous year to compete in any 4-H event. Most competitions are held in the following age divisions: Juniors (8-10), Intermediate (11-13) and Seniors (14-18). However, age divisions do vary from program to program. Always carefully review the registration information for 4-H events.

What is a Clover Kid? Children ages 5-7 are known in 4-H as “Clover Kids.” These children are full 4-H members and can participate in a wide range of programs and activities, including the fair. However, because research has shown that competition at this age is detrimental, Clover Kid members are not allowed to participate in competitive events. These members do participate in many contests and receive participation ribbons. Their work is not “judged” and compared to other children’s work.

What does it cost to join 4-H? There is NO fee to join 4-H for all members, including Clover Kids in Merrick County. However, each 4-H club is run differently than another, and a 4-H club may require annual dues to participate.

How do I stay informed about 4-H opportunities?

Read the Merrick County Extension newsletter that is emailed to you or posted online. It will give you all the details about upcoming programs.

Visit the Merrick County 4-H website at: <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/merrick/educational-programs/merrick-county-4-h/>.

Check out our Merrick 4-H social media channels:

- ◆ Facebook— Merrick County 4-H, Nebraska (UNL Extension)
- ◆ Instagram — merrickcounty4h



YOUR FIRST STEP TO JOIN 4-H

4-H Club or Independent Member—What works best for you?

4-H Club:

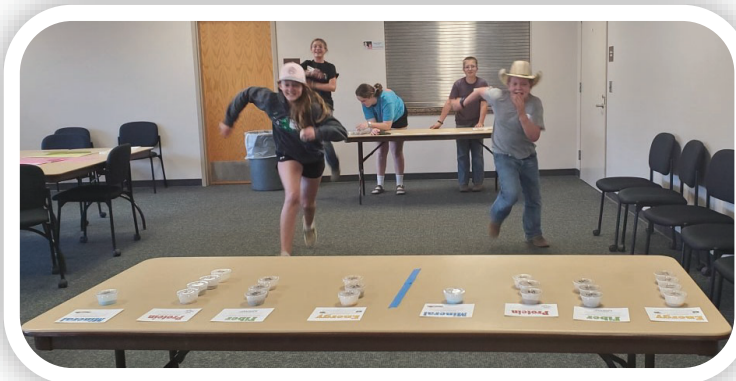
A 4-H club is an organized group of youth, led by an adult or adults, that provide a progressing series of educational experiences. 4-H clubs may meet in any location, have elected officers, and a set of rules approved by the membership to govern the club. The purpose of a 4-H club is to provide positive youth development opportunities, helping young people experience belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Families, Independent Members:

Families/youth may choose to participate in 4-H as Independents, operating independently of a formal group setting, such as a club. This may be an individual or family learning effort. For many youth, their exposure to 4-H experiences and learning materials comes through activities conducted either within their family or an independent membership. While 4-H encourages participation in club settings to promote friendships and interaction with other youth and adults, for some youth this is not always possible. We welcome families and independent members to participate as part of the 4-H experience.

We are always welcoming new clubs. 4-H clubs must have at least three families enrolled with five kids. If you would like to start your own 4-H club, please contact the Merrick County Extension Office at (308) 946-3843 or check online for further details, <http://4h.unl.edu/4hclubmember>.

4-H Clubs can vary by interest area, age group, and activities. If you would like a current 4-H club to contact you with further information about their club, please contact the Merrick County Extension Office.



4-H PROJECTS



What is a project? Each 4-H member will have an opportunity to select one or more projects to learn about during the year. A project is simply a topic or subject the member wants to explore. The member will focus on increasing their knowledge and skills on this topic during the year. Projects are completely self-paced. A member may focus on a project over the whole year, or spend just a few months on a specific project. Similarly, a member may choose to explore the same topic for many years, gaining a real, in-depth knowledge of the project.

Another member may prefer to explore a wide variety of projects during his/her 4-H years. In most cases, the member will end up with one or more finished exhibits to enter in the fair from each project he/she selects. With nearly 150 projects available, there is something to interest every child.

There is not a limit to the number of projects a member can select; however parents and leaders should help guide members in setting realistic, but challenging goals. It is always better to complete fewer projects that reflect quality workmanship than to do a "rush job" and complete a lot of poorer quality projects.

Project work is at the heart of 4-H. As youth work to complete a 4-H project, a lot more is happening than "just" learning new skills. In fact, project work encompasses all four "H's" - head, heart, hands and health.

Take for instance a young person working on a sewing project. Their project-related activities may involve...

HEAD *Mental development:* gaining deeper knowledge and reasoning abilities

- Learning how to select a pattern that is properly sized
- Utilizing smart consumer skills when shopping for fabric, equipment, and sewing notions
- Calculating the correct amount of fabric to purchase for various fabric widths

HEART *Emotional development:* developing interests, appreciation and wholesome attitudes

- Working as a team with fellow club members to select a sewing project to complete
- Caring for others by sewing baby blankets for the hospital

HANDS *Skills development:* ability to do, skill in doing, and the habit of doing

- Demonstrating the ability to properly thread a sewing machine
- Becoming skilled in sewing straight and curved seams that follow a seam allowance
- Completing a sewing project utilizing correct techniques

HEALTH *Physical development:* understanding an appreciation of a changing body

- Learning to select garments that are flattering for their body shape
- Developing poise and body posture when modeling the garment in a 4-H Fashion Show

4-H PROJECTS

How do we select a project? In most cases, club members, leaders or 4-H families choose a club project they want to complete during the year. Members will work on that project together at club meetings or independently. A club leader, parent volunteer, community resource person, or perhaps an older 4-H member may teach the club's project lesson.

4-H members can choose additional projects that they will be able to work on outside of their club meetings. They may seek guidance from their parents, leaders, community organizations, or other experts in the field to assist them in acquiring these new skills.

What is a 4-H project manual? To help guide your learning experience, 4-H offers project manuals. These written manuals provide age-appropriate, hands-on lessons to help youth acquire new skills and knowledge. There are youth manuals and adult helper manuals. Typically the manuals are developed in a series with three or four levels. These manuals are researched-based through Universities nationwide.

Please keep in mind that you are not required to utilize a project manual to guide your child's 4-H project, but you will find it very helpful. Also, do not feel like you have to complete every learning activity listed in the project manual. Think of the project manual as a very useful resource for you, rather than a "to do" list of activities that must be completed.

How do we find out what 4-H project manuals are available?

A current list of the 4-H project manuals called "Pick Your Project" is available at: <http://4hcurriculum.unl.edu>. Project manuals may be picked up at the Merrick County Extension Office or can be purchased online.

To help in selecting a project, you are welcome to view our project manuals at the Merrick County Extension Office. Stop in or call our office to see which manuals are on hand!

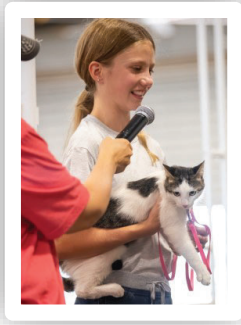
**Coming soon
YouTube Channel!**



***Merrick County
4-H Nebraska***



THE COUNTY FAIR



One of the highlights of the year for 4-H members is being able to exhibit their completed projects at the Merrick County Fair, and then hopefully have their exhibits selected for the Nebraska State Fair!

When is the fair? The Merrick County Fair is held at the end of July, beginning of August. As part of the fair, members have an opportunity to compete in a variety of small and large animal shows, as well as enter static exhibits. Many contests, such as Shooting Sports, Public Speaking, Performing Arts, and Ice Cream Roll occur before County Fair.

Who can enter the fair? Any youth (4-H age 5-18) enrolled in 4-H by June 15th of the current year can participate in the fair. Nebraska Extension in Merrick County will make the Fair Book available in April. The Fair Book lists all the 4-H classes that can be entered. For the most part, the classes do not change a lot from year to year, so you can look at previous fair books to get ideas for projects to enter in the fair.

How do we enter exhibits in the fair?

Static Exhibits: A static exhibit is any exhibit that isn't alive (doesn't breathe and/or walk). The process for entering a static exhibit in the fair is simple. In May/June, each 4-H member will receive a Merrick County Fair entry form. From class descriptions that are found in the Merrick County Fair Book, 4-Hers will write down which exhibits they are planning to enter in the fair. These pre-entry forms are due back to the Extension Office on the designated due date, typically July 10. Exhibit cards will be printed and available the week of fair for pick up at the Extension Office or may be picked up at fair check-in. Entry date and times will be listed on the fair schedule and in the newsletter. It is the responsibility of the 4-Her to bring their exhibits to the fairgrounds on entry day at the posted times.

Livestock Exhibits: The Nebraska Extension Office in Merrick County will announce the dates to have project animals tagged/identified, typically June 15. It is your responsibility to properly ID your animals by the deadline. Please watch for further information in the Merrick County 4-H newsletter and check dates on the website. You must also complete the pre-entry form due July 10 in order to compete at the Merrick County Fair.

How are exhibits judged?

Static Exhibits: All static exhibits are judged earning a purple, blue, red or white ribbon. Additional awards may be presented. Clover Kid entries are non-competitive and are not judged; each entry receives a Clover Kid ribbon. Youth receive a fair premium based upon the color of ribbon earned. Currently, Ag Society requires an Achievement Application be turned into the Extension office by October 1 to receive earned premium money.

Livestock Exhibits: All livestock exhibits are judged earning a purple, blue, red or white ribbon. Additional awards may be presented at the time of the livestock show. Youth receive a fair premium based upon the color of ribbon earned. Currently, Ag Society requires an Achievement Application be turned into the Extension office by October 1 to receive earned premium money.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR 4-H MEMBERS

Merrick County 4-H offers many different contests each year. Our staff will conduct the county contest, along side superintendents, as similar to the state contest as possible, utilizing the same rules, time allowances and judge's score sheets. You can find the complete details and scoresheets for several contests on the Nebraska State Fair website: <https://4hfairbook.unl.edu/fairbookview.php/rules>.

- **4-H Public Speaking & Presentations Contest**—Youth research, write, and present an original Speech, Public Service Announcement (PSA), Illustrated Presentation as an individual or team. Each should relate directly to the participant's 4-H experience.
- **4-H Performing Arts Show**—Individual, duet or group. Youth perform a talent of their choice, and may participate in two entries.
- **4-H Fashion Show**—Individual entry only. Youth sew a garment or purchase a garment and model it for the judges. Judging includes clothing construction; modeling, fit, confidence and poise; and how well they respond in a short interview process. All participants model their garments for the audience during 4-H Night.
- **Ice Cream Roll**—Individual entry only, with a rolling partner to assist in rolling if needed. Youth are judged on the mixing, measuring, and taste of the ice cream.
- **Achievement Applications**—Youth keep a record of their achievements using the standardized Nebraska 4-H Achievement Application. The applications are available on-line and can be used to apply for County and/or State level awards.
- **Diamond Clover Program**—The program consists of six levels that require a 4-H member to plan and report a broad range of age-appropriate accomplishments. The program's overall goal is to provide 4-H members a rich and diverse learning experience.
- **Shooting Sports Competition**—Individual entry only. Youth who have had instruction from a certified 4-H shooting sports leader can participate. Shooting sports leaders can be contacted for information about equipment requirements.
- **4-H Camps and Camp Scholarships**—4-H camps are offered throughout the summer with a wide variety of topics and activities available. Deadlines vary so please read your Merrick County 4-H Newsletter.
- **College Scholarships**—College scholarships are available on the state and local levels. Deadlines vary so please read your Merrick County 4-H Newsletter.
- **Fair contests**—Individual entry only. Fair contests include Livestock Judging and the Bicycle Rodeo. These are fun events and great learning opportunities!



RESOURCES



4-H Volunteer Information & Training Resources—<https://4h.unl.edu/volunteer>.
Nebraska 4-H invites you to make a difference in the life of a young person! 4-H is known for hands-on learning experiences and helping youth build confidence and practical life skills. Nebraska 4-H offers a wide variety of involvement opportunities for adult volunteers, from a one-time event or program to a multi-year experience.

As a volunteer, you can provide young people with developmental assets that last a lifetime, through a positive relationship with a caring adult; an inclusive and safe environment; opportunities to value others and master a skill; and much more. For more information on becoming a 4-H volunteer contact the Merrick County Extension Office.

Merrick County 4-H Social Media

Connect with Merrick County 4-H by visiting our social media channels. View pictures, videos, keep up-to-date and in the loop.

Merrick County
4H, Nebraska
(UNL Extension)
Non-Profit Organization



LIKE US ON  **facebook**

For the latest
updates, news,
workshops and
shows...



Instagram



merrickcounty4h

@MerrickCo4HNe





NEW 4-H MEMBER CHECKLIST

In order to have a successful first year in 4-H, please follow this checklist:

- Enroll online at <https://v2.4honline.com/>
- Choose 4-H projects
- Pickup project manuals
- Work on 4-H projects and take advantage of county workshops and contests
- ID animals by the deadline, if applicable
- Choose a 4-H club and contact the leader
- Attend 4-H meetings regularly
- Ensure parent involvement in the club
- Read the monthly newsletter, visit the 4-H website and social media pages frequently

Nebraska Extension in Merrick County

Located at

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