

General 4-H Information

What is 4-H?

4-H is the largest out-of-school youth program in the United States. There are more than 6 million 4-H members nationwide, and thousands of young people participate in Oregon 4-H each year. Through 4-H, young people learn and grow in partnership with caring adults to develop the skills and confidence needed to become contributing, productive, self-directed members of society. Because 4-H uses an active, learn-by-doing approach, young people see how their actions make a difference in the lives of others and the world around them.

Vision Mission and Values

- **Vision** - All youth experience a positive, thriving trajectory of development that leads to an adulthood marked by health and wellbeing, economic stability, social success, and civic engagement.
- **Mission** - 4-H provides young people with intentional, high quality learning experiences that promote positive interactions with adults and peers, sustained and active participation across time, and opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the world around them.
- **Core Values** - 4-H is based on the current theory, research, and practice of



positive youth development.

The 4-H Name and Emblem

It is the legal responsibility of the Cooperative Extension Service and the USDA to insure the consistent and correct use of the 4-H Name and Emblem by all levels of salaried and volunteer Extension staff, 4-H participants, and authorized non-Extension entities. Equally important is the responsibility to communicate the significance of the 4-H Name and Emblem as a government owned emblem that is protected by federal statute. By using the "18 U.S.C. 707" we are fulfilling our legal obligation to correctly inform the public of the federal protections and consequences of potential misuse. A shorter version is also available.

[4-H National Headquarters Fact Sheet; Authorization Responsibilities of the 4-H Name and Emblem](#)

The Symbols of 4-H

As 4-H has grown and expanded, symbols have been developed which express the spirit and rich tradition of 4-H.

- **The Four H's** - The four H's stand for Head, Heart, Hands and Health, representing the four-fold training and development that 4-H members receive. "Head, heart, and hands" was a familiar phrase with public speakers in the early 1900's. With these three words educators expressed the liberalizing of conventional education ("the three R's") to include practical arts ("the three H's"). The three H's were adopted by program organizers to reflect the educational theme of 4-H. A fourth H, for Health, was added. Together the four H's symbolize the development of the Head, to think, plan and reason; the Heart, to be concerned with the welfare of others, accept the responsibilities of citizenship, and develop positive attitudes; the Hands, to be useful, helpful, and skillful; and Health, to practice healthful living, enjoy life, and use leisure time productively.
- **The 4-H Emblem** - The national 4-H emblem is a green four-leaf clover with the letter "H" on each leaf. The design, attributed to O.H. Benson, an Iowa school superintendent, was adopted as the national emblem in 1911. Congress has twice passed legislation since that time protecting the 4-H name and emblem. Similar to a copyright, this protection means that the 4-H name and emblem cannot be used without being authorized by the national organization.
- **4-H Colors** - Green and white are the 4-H colors. Green is emblematic of springtime, life, and youth, while white symbolizes high ideals.
- **The 4-H Motto** - The 4-H motto is "To make the best better." Proposed by Carrie Harrison, a botanist with the U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, it was adopted in 1927 when the 4-H pledge was introduced.

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.

Promesa 4H

Prometo usar...

mi mente para pensar con más claridad
mi corazón para ser más leal
mis manos para ser más servicial,
mi salud para cuidarme más,
por mi club, mi comunidad, mi país y mi mundo.

In repeating the pledge, a member
raises the right hand to the side of the head when speaking line 1;
lowers hand to heart when speaking line 2;
extends hands, palms upward, when speaking line 3;
and stands straight when speaking lines 4 and 5.

The pledge was adopted in 1927 during the first National 4-H Club Camp in Washington, D.C. Otis Hall, state 4-H leader in Kansas, was responsible for the original wording, which remained unchanged until 1973 when the words "and my world" were added.