

4-H Wagon Train Briefing

The 4-H Wagon Train has been going for more than 38 years and has touched many lives - both youth and adult. Because we have the support of 4-H, registration for the program is through the OSU Extension Service. Each pioneer registers as either a youth member or an adult volunteer leader. We follow the 4-H guidelines for how we work, learn, play, and conduct ourselves at the general meetings during the year, the Tune Up Trek in June, and the Wagon Train Trek in July which is a week-long trip.

Attendance at a General Meeting is required to prepare everyone for the Trek. Information regarding the trail, dates, pre-Trek activities, volunteer workload, and health and safety issues is provided - as well as spending time getting to know the other pioneers. The meeting is necessary to ensure the July Trek is a positive experience for all of us.

The 4-H Wagon Train is made up of volunteer adult leaders and 4-H youth members, who head up committees that plan, lead, and make decisions during the year to prepare for the Wagon Train. Each adult board leader or committee member has a "Junior" who works with and assists the adult with their position during the year and most importantly during the trip. Each year we have a "Juniors' Day" where the Juniors lead all the activities for that day and make all the decisions.

This is a working wagon train and you are expected to prepare yourself and/or your animal physically for the 7-15 mile routes we will be on each day of the Trek. 4-H Wagon Train provides meals for the week, but you will be asked to help serve, clean up, and prepare lunches as part of your role as a pioneer.

The 4-H Wagon Train is a week-long excursion usually scheduled for the third week of July. The Wagon Train will be travelling over gravel logging roads, dirt tracks and sometimes pavement. Staging will be determined by the Scout and the scouting committee, then announced to the general membership along with driving directions. We typically have between 75 to 100 participants. We will be divided into wagon families and each family has duties or chores that are assigned each day. We hike, ride an equine, or drive a wagon each day, working towards our final destination. Each night we set up camp and have "Family Circle" during which we give awards, make announcements, sing songs, and tell stories. Early in the morning, we break camp and head out on the trail again towards the next campsite. Tuesday or Wednesday is a lay-over day, where we take a break, invite family and friends to join us for the day at a pre-determined location, play games, wash & shower, do crafts, and have presentations. The next day we are on the trail again, Saturday we clean up and head home.

While the Trek is a fun, learning experience, long, hot days can be expected. There are times when chores have to be done, things break and have to be fixed, and trails must be cleared. However, just like every other wagon train that ever reached its destination,

successful cooperation and problem solving pulled them along; 4-H Wagon Train is no different. We will attempt to prepare you for some of the stressful situations that might come up. We will also provide opportunities for problem solving and personal growth.

The Tune-Up Trek, held on about the third weekend in June, is a “trial run” for what is to come during the week in July. Tune-Up Trek is open to anyone whether they plan to go on the full Trek or not, but it is required by all those planning on going on the full Trek in July, especially first-time Pioneers. Others may want to attend Tune-Up to get a feel for the Wagon Train and prepare to attend the next year. For those attending Tune-Up Trek only are charged a nominal fee, per person, for the weekend. Tune-Up provides preparation for the Trek in July. It gives you a chance to check out your gear, get used to being around animals and wagons, and get to know your “wagon family.”

Wagon Train is open to youth starting age 9 and in 4th grade and adults who are eligible for 4-H enrollment. All adults must be registered 4-H leaders to participate. We welcome Hikers, Equestrians (horses, mules, donkeys), support personnel, and of course WAGONS. We provide all food and water. Meals are prepared by the Camp Cook and the Youth. We provide High Quality Certified Weed Free Hay. We provide the rolling restrooms referred to as “Biffies.” You bring yourself, your personal gear (packing list provided) your horse or a great pair of hiking boots and MOST importantly a good attitude with a willingness to learn, work together and have an amazing experience in the wilderness.

Cost: \$300 per Participant + a fee for weed free hay per animal. Registration must be submitted on or before the May General Meeting.

Morning prep for a day on the trail

Mornings go fast for everyone. It is imperative that the equines are fed first thing after you wake to allow them time to eat while you pack your gear and feed yourself. It’s tempting to feed a lot of hay in the morning, but we need to be careful not to waste hay. Once the hay is on the ground there is no taking it back. Not only is uneaten hay wasteful, it leaves a trace that we were there. We really do try to “leave no trace”.

Know what your family chores are for the day and discuss with your Wagon Family Head how and when those chores will get done. Serving breakfast and breakfast cleanup really eat into your time for getting your camp gear packed up and your horse tacked. Accepting help from non-equine folks is useful, but know what they are capable of (brushing, watering, hauling gear from shelter to gear drop location, etc.) and be willing to educate.

Help break down your family shelter and haul your gear to the drop location before getting your horse ready. In fact, this should be done before breakfast. Don't forget to take down your highline and scatter manure and any leftover hay. Having a helper hold your horse while you do this is helpful. Equines may also be tied to a tree using an extra tree saver. You might consider carrying an extra tree saver, rolled up, in your saddle bags for tying your horse to a tree during lunch layovers on the trail. Once everything is where it should be, listen for directions about where the outriders are gathering for the day's trek and the cue to mount your equine.