



# 2026 Elkhart County 4-H Welcome Guide



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## **4-H Mission & Vision**

**4-H Mission:** The Indiana 4-H Youth Development mission is to provide real-life educational opportunities that develop young people who will have a positive impact on their communities and the world.

**4-H Vision:** Indiana 4-H Youth Development mission strives to be the premier, community-based program empowering young people to reach their full potential.

4-H is unique because it is the only youth organization tied to the research base of our nation's land-grant university system. This connection allows Purdue Extension Staff and the volunteers they work with to receive training based on the most up-to-date research on youth development theory and practice.

In Indiana, 4-H can be found in all 92 counties as delivered through Purdue Extension. Purdue Extension is the outreach link between local communities, the land grant universities, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Since 1914, this educational system has assisted in the well-being and productivity of people throughout the United States.

4-H has been around for more than 100 years and has become the largest youth development program in the nation. It prepares young people for leadership and exposes them to hands-on experiences alongside peers and caring leaders. With a network of more than 6 million youth and over 60 million alumni; 4-H fosters a positive youth development program. You can get involved through community clubs, afterschool programs, school enrichment, camps/workshops, and other special programs!

### **Did you know 4-H'ers are...**

4 times more likely to give back to their communities,  
2 times more likely to make healthier choices, and  
2 times more likely to participate in STEM activities!



## Emblem

The 4-H emblem is the four-leaf clover with the letter “H” on each leaf. The H's stand for head, heart, hands, and health. The 4-H emblem is legally protected and must be used correctly.

## Colors

The 4-H colors are green and white.

## Motto

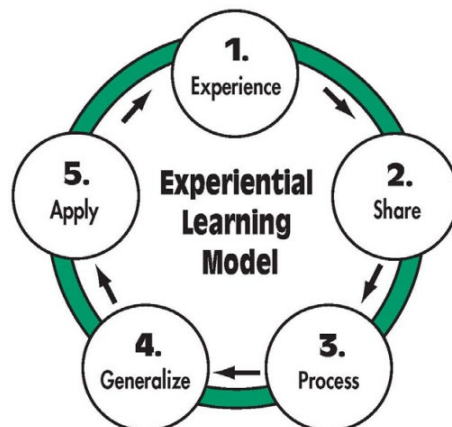
“To make the best better.”

## 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.

## Learning Model

Young people learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. 4-H programs are designed to provide hands-on educational experiences that are reinforced through personal and group reflection and application “do-reflect-apply.” This is “Experiential Learning.”



## **Dates to Remember**

Below are important events that take place throughout the year.  
(Note: Not all events are listed below.)

### **October 1<sup>st</sup>**

- 4-H enrollment opens for grades K-12. Enroll through [4-H Online](#)

### **January 15<sup>th</sup>**

- Scholarship applications due

### **May 15<sup>th</sup>**

- Project add/drop deadline in 4-H Online
- Animal ID deadline
- FairEntry opens
- 4-H Round-Up registration
- 4-H Academy registration

### **June 1<sup>st</sup>**

- 4-H Camp
- 4-H Round-Up
- YQCA/Quality Assurance completion deadline
- FairEntry deadline
- Mini 4-H Livestock Camp
- Mini 4-H Day Camp
- Youth Awards deadline

### **July**

- 4-H Achievement Scholarship due (4-H'ers in their senior year of high school)
- Animal Science Day Camp
- Millie Christofeno Perseverance Award application deadline
- Project check-in (see July calendar/list of dates)
- Elkhart County 4-H Fair time!

## **4-H Friday Nugget**

The 4-H Friday Nugget is sent electronically twice each month, usually the first and third Friday. You may access it via email or by requesting a hard copy at the Extension Office. Please read the 4-H Nugget carefully and keep it handy to know about 4-H news!

## **4-H Clubs**

4-H clubs are groups of youth and adults who meet on a regular basis and together practice positive youth development and cooperative learning. Clubs traditionally meet once a month. Some clubs meet year-round while others start meeting in the winter. Each club elects officers from the club membership. The officers conduct the business portion of the club meeting.

4-Hers may belong to any 4-H club in the county. Residence does not restrict club membership. All clubs should strive to create a quality learning environment for youth that give members a chance to be an active part of the club, to enhance life skills, and to promote positive youth development throughout all activities.

In Elkhart County, we have two main types of 4-H Clubs:

**General Club:** General clubs cover a broad range of topics within the 4-H program.

**Subject-Specific Club:** Subject-Specific clubs focus more on a specific subject area. Beef Club, Shooting Sports, and Media are all examples.

Youth may participate in many clubs depending on their interests. It is recommended that if a youth is involved in a project where a related club exists, that they be involved with that club as well since many of those club meetings will help the youth understand that topic. Other things to consider when selecting a club are the meeting location, dates of meetings, youth

availability, size of club you are comfortable with, and areas of interest.

## **4-H Parent/Guardian Information**

### Time Commitment:

One 4-H year includes about 1-2 hours per month for club meetings and whatever time you choose each week for 4-H project work. You will have a better experience if you put more time into your project!

### Cost:

The State Program Fee for 4-H is \$20 per member for members in 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade. There is a \$60 maximum per family for State Program Fees. So, if you have four or more 4-H members in your family, you will only pay the \$60 fee.

Mini 4-H (grades K-2) is free!

### Responsibilities:

- Help your child enroll in 4-H clubs and select one or more projects to complete to fulfill 4-H requirements
- Make sure your child attends 4-H club meetings
- Provide or arrange for transportation
- Help your child to complete any 4-H responsibilities for which he/she has volunteered
- Help out at 4-H club activities during the 4-H year!
- Support your child's 4-H project work

## Mini 4-H

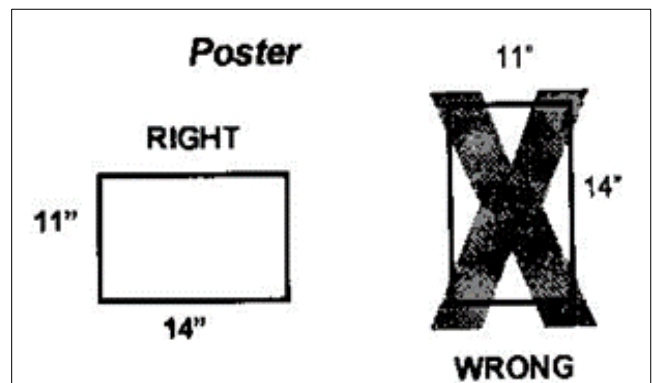
Mini 4-H is a program for youth in kindergarten through 2nd grade. Mini 4-H'ers are not required to attend meetings but are encouraged to attend the special activities planned for them. There's no competition in Mini 4-H. There are many available Mini 4-H projects. Mini 4-H'ers can select up to two projects to complete each year.

### Mini 4-H Projects:

Arts & Crafts  
Beef  
Bicycle  
Bugs  
Collections  
Construction & Architectural Replica  
Cake Decorating  
Dinosaurs  
Farm Animals  
Flowers & Garden  
Foods  
Forestry  
Models  
Pets  
Photography  
Sewing  
Tractor  
Wildlife

### Mini 4-H Poster Requirements:

Mini 4-H posters must be exactly 11 inches by 14 inches, displayed horizontally, and attached to a stiff backing. You may use foam board. Foam board is already stiff and does not require additional backing. Posters must be covered with clear plastic such as a poster sleeve. Foam boards and poster sleeves can be purchased at the Extension Office while supplies last.



## 4-H Projects

The Elkhart County 4-H program offers a vast array of projects to choose from. Some projects are specific to certain clubs but many can be completed in any club.

Manuals and project information can be found on the [Elkhart County 4-H website](#) or picked up from the Purdue Extension Elkhart County office located on the Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds.

Many projects require various materials for completion. These items may include a 22" x 28" poster, photography salon board, or cake board - all of which can be purchased at the Extension Office while supplies last.

### 4-H Projects Available:

Achievement Record Book

Aerospace

Animal Posters (Animal Education)

Arts & Crafts (includes 17 options)

ATV Safety\*

Auto Mechanics\*

Beef\*

Beekeeping

Bicycle\*

Blacksmithing

Cake Decorating

Cat\*

Child Development

Collections

Computer

Consumer Clothing

Dairy\*

Dairy Feeder Calf\*

Dog\*

Electric

Entomology

Fashion Revue

Floriculture

Foods: Baked & Preserved  
Forestry  
Garden  
Genealogy  
Geology  
Goat\*  
Health  
Home Environment  
Horse & Pony\*  
Junior Leaders\*  
Lamb (Sheep)\*  
Lawn/Garden Tractor Operator Skills\*  
Media\*  
Microwave Cooking  
Performing Arts  
Pet Animal (Animal Education)  
Photography  
Remote Control  
Poultry\*  
Rabbit\*  
Sewing  
Shooting Sports\*  
Small Engine  
Soil and Water Science  
Sportfishing\*  
Sports  
Swine\*  
Tractor Operator Skills\*  
Veterinary Science  
Weather and Climate Science  
Wildlife  
Woodworking  
Zero Turn-Mower & Operator Skills\*

\*Requires participation in a subject-specific Elkhart County 4-H Club



## 4-H Ribbons

**State Fair (Purple):** This is the best overall exhibit in a division, section, or category and has been selected for exhibit at the Indiana State Fair.

**Champion (Purple):** This is the best overall exhibit in a division, section, or category where a State Fair entry does not exist, and it is awarded when merited. Example: A champion ribbon is awarded to Microwave Cooking because it is a county project and not available on the state level.

**Reserve Champion (Lavender):** This is the second-best overall exhibit in a division, section, or category and is awarded when merited.

**Honor Group (Purple):** This ribbon is given to first place group recipients that have done an outstanding job. State Fair winners and Champions are selected from this group.

**Group A (Blue):** First place group. Meets all requirements and project work is very good.

**Group B (Red):** Second place group. Project work is good but does not meet requirements in some way and/or is missing an important element.

**Group C (White):** Third place group. Does not meet requirements and is missing two or more important elements.

**Participation (Green):** Given to a late entry project that arrives after judging is finished. All projects are to be checked in at the designated times.

**Mini 4-H (Light Green):** Given to Mini 4-H youth in grades K-2 that complete a project.

**Special Activity (Yellow):** Given for special activities participated in during the year, such as Performing Arts.

**Ribbons and judges' comments are available for pick up during the fair in the ECCC (4-H Exhibit Building) kitchen during building hours.**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **Who can participate in 4-H?**

Traditional 4-H is for those that are in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Mini 4-H is a noncompetitive version of 4-H for those in K, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades.

### **How many projects can I do?**

Traditional 4-H has no limit on the number of projects that you can participate in each year. We encourage youth to take a number they are comfortable with and can complete within the year.

Mini 4-H is limited to two projects.

### **How do I know what projects I can take?**

Visit the [Elkhart County 4-H website](#) or contact the Purdue Extension Elkhart County office at 574-533-0554 or email [elkhartces@purdue.edu](mailto:elkhartces@purdue.edu)

### **What is Fair Entry and how do I enter my projects?**

[Fair Entry](#) is a platform used to manage fair exhibit data, track 4-H results, and ensure all projects and animals are properly checked into our fair data.

### **Are there any other fees associated with 4-H?**

Project supplies, trips, and some 4-H activities will require additional fees.

### **Can I add or drop projects?**

Yes! You may add or drop projects up until May 15th! You can make changes through your 4-H Online account or call the Extension Office at 574-533-0554 for assistance.

### **How do I contact someone if I have questions?**

Call the Purdue Extension Elkhart County office at 574-533-0554 or email [elkhartces@purdue.edu](mailto:elkhartces@purdue.edu). Club leaders are also a great resource!

## How do I enroll?

Log in to [4-H Online](#) to enroll! If you need assistance in enrolling online or need access to use a computer, please contact or visit the Extension Office during office hours – Monday through Friday 8:00am-4:30pm.

## What is a club? When do they meet?

A club is a group of kids that meet together to answer questions, conduct business, and learn new skills. Meeting times vary. To learn more information about the 4-H clubs offered in Elkhart County, visit the [Elkhart County 4-H website](#).

### Contact Information

Purdue Extension Elkhart County  
Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds  
17746 County Road 34 Ste. E, Goshen, IN 46528  
Office Hours: Monday-Friday – 8:00am-4:30pm  
574-533-0554     [elkhartces@purdue.edu](mailto:elkhartces@purdue.edu)

Elkhart County 4-H Website:  
<https://extension.purdue.edu/county/elkhart/4-h.html>

Facebook: [Elkhart County 4-H](#)  
Instagram: [purdueextelkhart](#)

**Robby Kelly**, Extension Educator - 4-H Youth Development; County  
Extension Director - [kelly115@purdue.edu](mailto:kelly115@purdue.edu)

**Sthele Greybar**, Extension Educator - 4-H Youth Development -  
[sgreybar@purdue.edu](mailto:sgreybar@purdue.edu)

**Corey Sharp**, Extension Educator - 4-H Youth Development -  
[sharp22@purdue.edu](mailto:sharp22@purdue.edu)

**Brandy Cavanagh**, Office Coordinator - [bcavanagh@purdue.edu](mailto:bcavanagh@purdue.edu)

**Jennifer Poe**, 4-H Secretary/Volunteer Coordinator - [poej@purdue.edu](mailto:poej@purdue.edu)

**Penny Conover**, 4-H Secretary/Database Specialist - [pconove@purdue.edu](mailto:pconove@purdue.edu)