



georgia4h.org

HISTORY OF 4-H

4-H began as a simultaneous response to needs throughout the country, than as the idea of one individual. The goal of the program was to extend agricultural education to rural youth by organizing boys and girls clubs through "learning by doing."

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The roots of 4-H began at the turn of the century when progressive education started to emphasize the needs of young people and to introduce nature as a basis for a better agricultural education. Boys and girls clubs and leagues established in schools and churches to meet these needs. To spark the interest of young people, Farmers Institutes cooperated with school superintendents promoting production contests, soil tests and plant identification. By March 1914 several boys and girls clubs had already exhibited projects. Most states had clubs outside the schools with rural parents acting as volunteer leaders and County Extension agents provided materials. Farmers saw the practical benefits and public support and enthusiasm for 4-H grew throughout the nation.

TIES TO FORMAL EDUCATION AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

The Morrill Act of 1862 provided federal lands to establish land-grant colleges and universities. In 1890, colleges and universities for black citizens were established in the southern region to insure that all people were served. The state land-grant universities and the [Cooperative Extension Service of the USDA](#) maintain contact with the development of 4-H. The land-grant institutions recommended organizing a distinct administrative division in each land-grant institution to coordinate the many Cooperative Extension activities that were developing. By 1912 virtually all of the land-grant institutions in the southern states had signed cooperative agreements with the USDA and had organized Extension departments.

FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF 4-H

Congressional appropriations to the state land-grant institutions began in 1902 for development of early Extension work within the states. In 1914, the [Lever Act](#) established the Cooperative Extension System within the USDA state land-grant universities and the counties. Since the early legislation Congress has continued to support 4-H.

RECENT HISTORY

Through the years, the overall objective of 4-H has remained the same:

development of youth as individuals and as responsible and productive citizens. 4-H serves youth through a variety of methods:

- organized clubs
- 4-H special interest or short term-groups
- 4-H school enrichment programs
- 4-H instructional TV
- 4-H camping
- 4-H activities
- 4-H centers or
- as individual members.

4-H NAME

The first use of the term "4-H Club" in a federal document appeared in 1911 in a bulletin written by Gertrude L. Warren. By 1924, wider usage of the name was adopted. This was used thereafter throughout the world.

4-H EMBLEM

The first emblem design was a three-leaf clover, introduced by O.H. Benson sometime between 1907-08. From the beginning, the three "H's" signify Heart and Hands. A four-leaf clover design with H's appeared around 1909. In 1911, Benson referred to the need for four H's -- suggesting that they stand for "Head, Heart, Hands, and Hustle. . . head trained to think, plan and reason; heart trained to be true, kind and sympathetic; hands trained to be useful, helpful and skillful; and the hustle to render ready service, to develop health and vitality." In 1911, 4-H club leaders approved the present 4-H design. O.B. Martin is credited with suggesting that the **H's signify Head, Heart, Hands and Hustle** - universally used since then. The 4-H emblem was patented in 1924 and Congress passed a law protecting the use of the 4-H name and emblem in 1927. It was slightly revised in 1948.

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.***

Otis Hall, State Leader of Kansas, was responsible for the original wording of the 4-H pledge, officially adopted by the State 4-H Leaders at the first National 4-H camp in 1927. The pledge remained unchanged until 1973, when it was revised to include "and my world."

NATIONAL 4-H COUNCIL

Established in 1976, National 4-H Council is a not-for-profit organization that uses private and public resources to fulfill its mission of "building partner-

community youth development that value and involve youth in solving is critical to their lives, their families, and society." Council focuses on diverse groups of young people in a variety of urban and suburban locales while continuing to serve youth in rural areas. National 4-H Council helps provide "hands-on" co-educational programs and activities to young people nationwide in collaboration with the youth development education initiatives of the Cooperative Extension System of the United States Department of Agriculture, state land grant universities and counties.

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The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperate. Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, origin, age, sex or disability. An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force.