



4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

Nebraska 4-H Youth Development

Tips for Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships

Getting youths and adults to work together can be challenging. Here are some helpful tips for working to create youth-adult partnerships.

- **Establish Clear Goals and Responsibilities**

Each youth and adult must have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for achieving the goals for the partnership.

- **Possess Mutual Respect**

Mutual respect leads to positive relationships between youths and adults and helps to create an environment in which the partners are able to establish and carry out a common mission and vision for their communities. The youths and adults each bring valuable ideas, talents, and skills to the partnership. Each must be open-minded and willing to learn from one another.

- **Ensure Open Communication**

Communication is essential for youths and adults to work effectively together in achieving goals. When youths and adults communicate openly, conflicts in their approaches to situations are more easily resolved, and the capabilities of both are enhanced.

- **Provide Capacity-Building and Training**

Effective partnerships set up youths and adults for success by avoiding throwing them into situations for which they are not prepared. Leadership is a continuing learning process. Both the youth and the adult may need training in areas such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and evaluation.

- **Share the Leadership**

Share the work activities and the power to make decisions. Shared leadership is a vehicle to empower and increase youth participation in planning, decision-making, and program implementation and evaluation. If youths have no power to make decisions, their participation is not one of partnership. Youth-adult partnerships focus on collaboration and emphasize youths as fresh resources with unique gifts to share. There are many ways to involve youths in constructive activities that can strengthen communities. For example, youths can partner with adults to perform community needs assessments, write grant proposals, raise funds, design programs, implement ideas and projects, collect data, deliver services, or evaluate a program's effectiveness. When youths contribute to the larger purpose of the community, they develop leadership, citizenship, and life skills. Adults and the community reap the benefits of what youths can accomplish when they are challenged, engaged, and valued as citizens. When youths and adults work in partnership, they create a formidable unit that can have a powerful effect in problem solving, solution implementation, and positive change in the community. Youths should have a voice in issues that affect them, and youth-adult partnerships can empower them to participate.

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, et al. 2003. Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual. Tokoma Park, MD. Chong, J. (2006). Benefits of youth-adult partnerships. (electronic version). Children and Family. (August 2006). University of Hawaii Cooperative Extension, Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawaii. Topp, A. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension 4-H Youth Development.



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