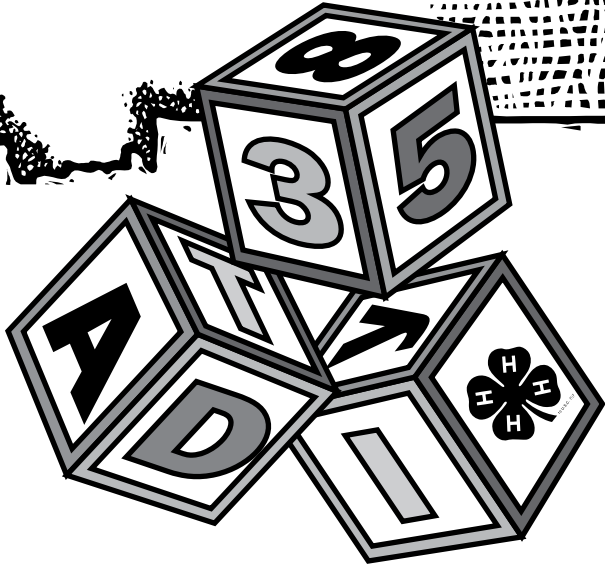




Montana 4-H Center
FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Starting a 4-H Club



#5278

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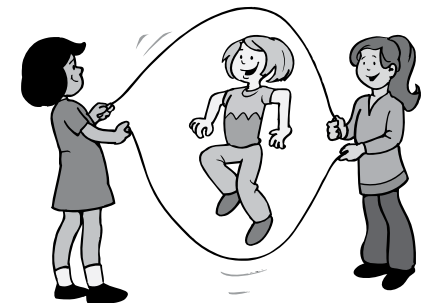
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Why Be the Leader that Starts a Club?

Starting a 4-H club is an intensive process requiring time and energy but it is worth the effort in knowing that you can truly make a difference. If you are a leader thinking of starting a new club you have challenged yourself to create enthusiasm for life-long learning and positive youth development. As a caring adult, and leader of the club you will provide experiences that will be rewarding and fun for youth and adults. Remember that you are not alone in this task. 4-H is the largest out-of school educational and youth development program in Montana. The program is administered by the 4-H county extension agents with advisory help from the 4-H Center for Youth Development at Montana State University (MSU), which is the land-grant university in Montana. As a part of this group dedicated to positive youth development, you can help youth gain the skills they will need to become successful contributing adults.

As you become involved in the process of starting a club, remember that each club will have a different "look". The look of the club comes from leadership styles, personalities, community needs, individual needs and available resources. These all combine to give 4-H clubs the diversity and flexibility that keeps 4-H relevant to each new generation. Watching youth grow from quiet and unsure children to confident and accomplished teens makes the time and energy well worthwhile.

This guide is designed to help you get your club off to a successful start by outlining the building blocks of 4-H and steps to starting a 4-H club.



4-H in Montana

4-H is the youth education program of Montana State University Extension, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture and local county governments. This relationship makes 4-H unique in comparison to other youth organizations. The connection between 4-H and the land-grant university means there are trained professionals who are MSU employees to provide administrative leadership for the 4-H program in each county. These individuals ensure that 4-H programs are based on "best practices" and current positive youth development research.

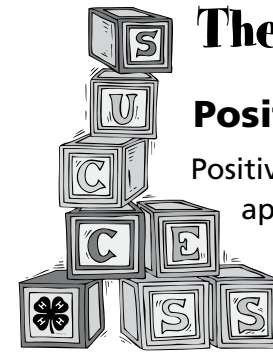
The mission of Montana 4-H is to educate youth and adults for living in a global and ever changing world by using the resources of Land-Grant Universities and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Montana 4-H strives to create environments for positive youth development using four key concepts, belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence. Through educational, learning-by-doing projects, club meetings, community service projects, events, and activities - young people and adults work toward enhancing the development of these five LIFE SKILLS:

- Positive self-concept
- Decision-making and responsibility for choices
- An inquiring mind and lifelong learning
- Relating to self and others
- Acquiring a concern for communities--local and global



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The Building Blocks of 4-H

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development is an intentional approach to programming that focuses on enhancing the skills of youth so they can become confident, have a sense of connection, show good character and care about themselves and others. 4-H helps youth accomplish this with the help of caring adults who work as county extension agents and extension volunteers. Together they provide a safe environment for youth to explore and expand their interests' and learn new skills.

The County Extension Agent Role in 4-H

County Extension agents are employees of Montana State University, and provide leadership for the 4-H program. They work cooperatively with parents, volunteer leaders, Extension and non-extension staff to provide educational programs that increase knowledge and enhance life skill development in youth. The county extension agent has the final decision related to the conduct, discipline, health and safety of members and leaders participating in the 4-H program.



4-H Clubs

4-H Clubs are the traditional organizational units that most people think of when they want to join Montana 4-H. Starting a club requires a minimum of five members from three families and one adult leader that fulfills the role of the organizational leader. The club is a building block of 4-H that gives youth the opportunity to learn about their projects, leadership, citizenship, and community service. Club work also teaches teamwork, communication and decision-making skills to youth.

Clubs can have many different looks, listed below are the most common:

- **Multi-Project (Community) Clubs** - an organized group of youth with volunteer leaders, officers, and a planned program that is carried out throughout all or several months of the year. To be an official 4-H Club, the club must have By-laws, and an approved Charter.
- **Single Project Clubs** - Single project clubs are similar to multi project clubs, but focus on one main project. A horse club is an example. All the members would be enrolled in the project with some or all of their meetings held at a riding arena.
- **Special Interest Clubs** - Groups of youth meeting for specific learning experiences that involve direct teaching by Extension staff or trained volunteers. Special Interest Clubs tend to meet for shorter time frames. Instead of having a meeting each month of the year, the club holds a series of meeting with a specifically planned program. This type of club does not elect officers. Shooting sports and dog obedience are popular examples.

Clubs are the traditional method of being involved in 4-H, but there are many other ways youth can be involved in 4-H. Some counties have afterschool, school enrichment, camping, individual study programs and instructional TV/video programs. Individual counties are encouraged to develop clubs and programs that work best in their areas. Contact the local 4-H county extension agent to learn more about opportunities in your county.

4-H Members

4-H is available to all youth regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital and family status. However, there are specific age related categories of membership and some types of clubs may be more appropriate for joining than others.

- **Cloverbuds** - In Montana, youth who turn 6 years of age between October 1 and September 30 may join 4-H as a Cloverbud and enroll only in the Cloverbud project. Cloverbuds do not participate in competitive activities and cannot enroll in animal projects.
- **Members** - Youth who turn 9 between October 1 and September 30 may join as a Montana 4-H member. Members need to enroll in at least one project, activity or program each year and have the option to re-enroll each consecutive year. There are additional age restrictions at the state and county levels for some projects, activities and programs. Additional age guidelines can be found on the state 4-H website, (www.montana4h.org), and at your county extension office. Shooting sports and horse are two projects that have more specific state and county level age guidelines.
- If youth turn 19 years of age prior to October 1, they are ineligible to re-enroll in 4-H unless still in high school.



4-H Leaders

Adults at least 19 years of age can apply to be a leader. All adults must complete the Leader Enrollment Application and Volunteer Screening Form, pass the leaders certification process and be approved by Extension before becoming a 4-H leader. After becoming a leader there are voluntary leader training opportunities to help leaders become more prepared and confident. Trainings, such as “Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development” and the “FUNdamentals of Positive Youth Development,” are taught by Extension staff and experienced volunteer leaders and provide an opportunity for leaders to learn more about the 4-H mission and how to successfully promote positive youth development. All leaders are strongly encouraged to attend these trainings and other county, regional and state events that have programs focusing on volunteer leader development.

- **4-H Organizational Leader** is the adult responsible for the functioning of the 4-H club. This person works cooperatively with the county office and the Leader’s Council to stay informed and pass along information. Organizational leaders facilitate regular club meetings and keep the club organized and operating according to 4-H policies and procedures.
- **4-H Project Leaders** are adults or teen leaders responsible for a given project area. These leaders help 4-H members gain specific knowledge and skills and encourage members to share what they have learned through demonstrations, record books, speeches, and other presentations.
- **4-H Activity Leaders** are adults, teen leaders, or youth volunteers responsible for designated 4-H activities. These leaders are



often responsible for non-project activities. They may work with individuals, small groups, or entire clubs on demonstrations, recreation, judging, community service projects, or other special events and activities.

Steps to Starting a Club



Step 1 — Finding Interest

The best first step for starting a new club is **visiting with the County Extension Staff**. They can share ideas for determining interest, find other families and aid in promoting an informational meeting.

Next **set a date and hold an informational meeting**. This meeting should be held in a public venue that is accessible to everyone. 4-H programs in some counties have public buildings that clubs meet in and may be available to you. If this is not possible, other ideas for meeting sites include libraries and schools, as many allow groups like 4-H to meet in their facilities at no charge in the evening or on weekends.

Work with the 4-H extension staff to set a date, time and place. Having the extension agent at the meeting may be helpful. The county extension agent may also know of adult leaders and/or teen leaders that could attend the informational meeting to help answer questions and promote 4-H.

If the county Extension agent, adult and/or teen leaders are coming to help with the meeting, talk with them about the agenda before the meeting. Review questions you are anticipating and let them know how they can help you so they come to the meeting prepared to assist.



Step 2 — Informational Meeting

The organizing parent/leader(s) should arrive early to the meeting site to set the room up and to welcome interested families as they arrive. Have everyone, youth and adults; sign a sheet that asks for contact information including name, address, phone number, and email. A station to make name tags is also a good idea. If you know a person's name when addressing him/her, he/she will feel more welcome.

Keep in mind: The ideal meeting should be no longer than an hour and a half, from start to finish. It is important to respect everyone's time.



Sample Agenda and Tips

- **Call the meeting to order.**

Start with a get acquainted activity as a great way to focus people and make them feel more comfortable. The activity should be simple; an easy idea is to have everyone introduce themselves and give some background on why they are attending.



- **Introduce 4-H to everyone.**

Start by introducing county agent and other adult and teen leaders helping with the meeting. Topics to talk about might include: the structure of 4-H, the life skills that 4-H promotes, the group interaction skills taught through club and group activities and the benefits of 4-H to your, adults, and the community

- **Present some example of projects and project materials.**

Projects are found in the Clover Selection Guide publication and on line at montana4h.org. Remember to include areas that

clubs might participate in as a group such as citizenship and community service.

This is a good time for a few of the visiting adults and teen leaders to tell about a memorable 4-H project or activity.

- **Talk about types of clubs.**

Before the meeting, the type of club being organized may have already been discussed; but it is important to review the types of clubs and what makes each unique.

Open the floor to discussion for what type of club the meeting participants are looking for. As part of the conversation be sure to emphasize the importance of family involvement and talk about the roles of club leaders.

- **Wrap-up the meeting.**

To end the meeting, ask the question "Would you like to be a part of the new 4-H club and what day is good for the next meeting?" Some parents will automatically commit and other may need to think about it. Before they leave, have participants set a date and time for an organizational meeting.

- **Serve refreshments.**

Refreshments are important; this informal time lets people get to know each other and spend time visiting. Many questions that were not asked in the meeting may come up at this time.

Some families may not find this club or 4-H a fit for them. It is important to respect their decision and not take it personally. Successful clubs are ones where the club and families have similar expectations. It is ok for families to look around for a club that will be the "right fit" for their family and resources.

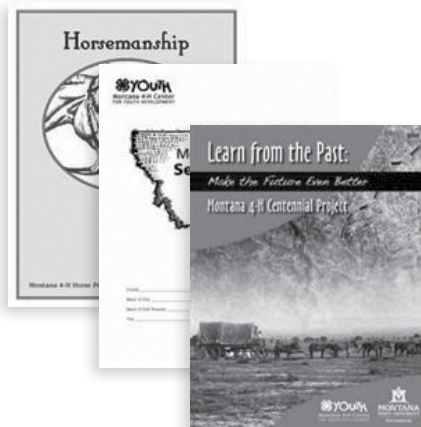
After the informational meeting, everyone is excited about starting a club; the next step is to hold an organizational meeting while the interest is high. A reminder call, email, or postcard to the families on your list a few days before the organizational meeting will help them remember.

Step 3 — Organizational Meeting

To get ready for the first club meeting, parents who want to become leaders in the new club should schedule some time as a group to meet with the County 4-H Extension Agent. The agent can go over the volunteer leader certification paperwork, member enrollment forms, chartering process, and the agenda for the first meeting. He/she can also put together paperwork that will be needed for the first meeting: Member enrollment forms, the Clover Project Selection Guide, Leader Enrollment Application and Volunteer Screening Forms. The other publications that would be good to have for the first meeting are: The New Family Handbook, (one per family) the officer books, and samples of project books. The county office may have the materials on hand, some of the materials can be found at the Montana 4-H website, (montana4h.org) while others may need to be ordered. Check for these resources at the county extension office.

The first meeting will be about making decisions and the organizational leader will play a major role in the meeting.

The first meeting is again a good time to have teen leaders from other clubs help out. They can assist with running the meeting, answer questions about projects and county events and help with recreation.



First Meeting Agenda

Get Acquainted Activity -helps kids be comfortable around each other and is a great to start the meeting. Below are some things you can try:

- **Two Truths and a Lie**

Have everyone write down three surprising things about themselves, two of which are true, and one of which is made up. Each person, in turn, reads their list and then the rest of the group votes on which “fact” they feel is the “false” one. If the group does not correctly pick a person’s made up “fact”, then that person wins. A group can have more than one winner. At the end, the whole group votes on which of the “winners” of the final round, had the most deceiving “fact”. This helps people get to know and remember other in the meeting.

- **Nametag Switch**



Have everyone make nametags for themselves and put them in a box. Mix up the names and pass the box around having everyone draw a random nametag, that is not their own. Then ask everyone to find the person whose nametag they drew, introduce themselves and share a few interesting things. When everyone has their own nametag, each person in the group will introduce the person whose nametag they drew and mention something of interest about that person. This helps youth and parents get to know and remember each other.

- **Variation with Shoes**

This works great in large groups and is a variation of the Name Tag Switch. Have everyone take off one of their shoes and throw it into a pile. Have each group member pick up a shoe and walk around the meeting room greeting other people as they try to match their selected shoe to the one another team member is wearing. This is a great way for new people to meet several members in a group.



The meeting will go better if the youth become engaged in the decision-making process. There may be children who are shy and not sure what to say so engage by giving them index cards and have them write ideas down. Collect the cards and record them on large pieces of paper. The group can then discuss ideas without the author being identified. As the discussion develops, be sure to emphasize positive comments and discourage any comments that are unkind.

Items that need to be decided:

- **What type of club?**

After the informational meeting you should have a pretty good idea of the type of club that will work best for this group, but, it is a good idea to again review the options so everyone is in agreement.

- **What should be the name of the club?**

Remember: the name should reflect the unique individual character of the group, while presenting a positive image of 4-H to the greater community. An example of a good name would be "Sage Creek Wranglers". Sage Creek identifies an area that current members live near and Wranglers is a gender neutral description of the youth in the club.

- **Elect officers, if appropriate.**

Describe what each office does and hold the election. Guide the youth through the democratic election process of nominating and voting. It may be a new concept for some. Using a secret ballot, will insure that each child is not feeling pressured to vote as part of a group.



Have the officer books available and present them to the new officers.

- **What types of educational/recreational activities and programs do the youth want their club to do?**

This is a good time for a short brainstorming session. Have the youth share ideas at this meeting, encourage them to think more about it and bring other ideas to the next meeting. Save these ideas and use them to help the club set their yearly goals at the next meeting.

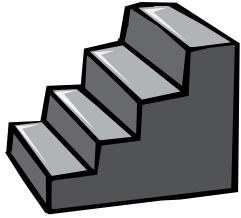
- **What projects are members interested in?**

It is recommended that new members limit the number of projects to two in the first year so that each can be completed and not become overwhelming. If the club will have members that are 9- and 10-year-olds, "Exploring 4-H" may be a great introductory project for them. In this project the members will learn a little about a lot of projects and will be ready to narrow down their selections for the following year.

Remind the youth to turn in enrollment cards, and dues, to the organizational leader by or at the next meeting so he/she can get them to the county office. Once youth are officially enrolled, project information can be ordered and families will start to get county information such as the newsletter and other correspondence.

End the meeting with a fun recreational activity and refreshments.

This is a great time for the visiting teen leaders to do a recreational program with the members. The organizational leader can take this time to talk with parents about the club. Together you, as the organizational leader, and the parents can set dates for the next meetings, talk about the expectations of the club and discuss how parents can become involved.



The Next Step

The club has elected officers, found a name for the club, briefed the youth and parents on projects, given out the enrollment and leader certification information and set the date and place for the 2nd meeting. The officer books'

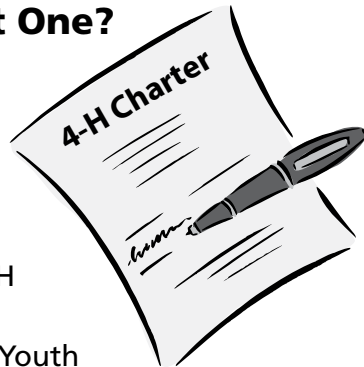
have directions for running a meeting and they describe the role of each officer. In the upcoming meetings the officers should lead the meetings with the organizational leader guiding them. Remember, meetings should be learning environments where youth familiarize themselves with meeting etiquette and parliamentary procedure.

Items to include on the agenda for the second meeting are, The Yearly Plan, and the Bylaws so that a Charter Application can be completed. Examples of these can be found in the Montana 4-H Secretary's Handbook and online at www.montana4h.org

The Charter, How Do We Get One?

A charter officially recognizes a 4-H Club or Affiliated 4-H Organization. Charters are provided by the United States Department of Agriculture through the State 4-H Office and Director of Extension. As a chartered 4-H club, groups have permission to use the name and emblem in conducting a 4-H Youth Development program. The Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development and the county office maintain documentation of all clubs in their jurisdiction.

Charters should be applied for shortly after organizing the 4-H club. The club needs to submit their Charter Application, Bylaws and Yearly Program Plan to their county extension office, and the county will forward it to the state 4-H office. The charter application can be found on the Montana 4-H website, www.montana4h.org.



Financial Guidelines

Financial guidelines can be found in the Montana Treasurer's book that is available in print and can be found on-line at montana4h.org. All policies and procedures related to finances must be followed.



Resources

The Montana 4-H Leaders Handbook	#5271
Clover Selection Guide	#5173
New 4-H Family Handbook	#5280
Montana 4-H President Book	#5244
Montana 4-H Vice President Book	#5245
Montana 4-H Secretary's Handbook	#5327
Montana 4-H Treasurer's Record Book	#5242
4-H Historian Book	#5260
4-H News Reporter Record Book	#5243
Getting Started as 4-H Project Leader	#90530
Club Annual Planning (web only)	#237
www.montana4h.org	
www.4-h.org	



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if I want to allow only a certain group of youth or adults to be involved in my club?

A: 4-H is for everyone. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Montana State University and the Montana State University Extension Service prohibit discrimination in all of their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital and family status. No member can be excluded from a particular club, although some clubs with a singular focus may not fit the youth's interest and the youth may want to visit with other clubs to find a better match.

Q: Can our club limit the number of youth in it?

A: Yes, but if a club decides to limit the number of youth in the club, then it is capped at that number and no youth can join once that number is reached. There can be NO EXCEPTIONS to that number for siblings or friends of current members.

Q: How many members can a club have?

A: To apply for a charter, a club must have five members from three families. The National and State 4-H Policies and Procedures do not put an upper limit to the number of members a club has. Experienced leaders say 20-35 is a good number of members but the optimal number for each club will vary, depending on the type of club and number of leaders, age of the members and meeting place size.

Q: What is the best time to start a 4-H club?

A: The 4-H year in Montana starts on October 1 and runs to September 30th. September and October are the best months to organize, but many counties do not limit enrollment to a certain time of the year so a club could also be started in other months. One thing to remember when starting a club is that counties may limit who can participate in events, such as fair or livestock shows, based on when youth enroll or whether other deadlines are met.

Q: Why do I have to complete a charter application?

A: Clubs have a charter so they can use the 4-H emblem and be an officially recognized Montana 4-H group.

Q: Do members pay dues?

A: Yes there often are dues for 4-H. They vary depending on the county and club. Check with the county extension office for the amount of dues and what they cover, as each county is a little different. If family circumstances are such that dues are prohibitive check with the local county extension office about scholarships or to learn if assistance is available.

Q: What can money raised in the name of 4-H be used for?

A: 4-H clubs may choose to finance their activities through their own fund-raising activities. Fund-raising should be done for the good of the total group, consistent with the county and state 4-H fund-raising policies. Funds raised in the name of 4-H, must be used for 4-H.

Funds from 4-H events may not be divided up amongst individual club members or otherwise used for personal, rather than 4-H, related expenses. For official 4-H events for which funds are raised, the revenue must be placed in an account to be used by the sponsoring club or 4-H entity.

Q: Can anyone interested in youth be a leader?

4-H does have a screening process for leaders but anyone interested in youth can complete the leader application and volunteer screening form and apply to be a leader. County offices will notify leaders when they have passed the certification process.

Q: How can I find out what is happening on the county level in 4-H?

A: Check with the county extension office, and they will share with you how they keep members and leaders informed. Many counties also have websites where they post information.

Q: Who can I ask for help if I am confused?

A: The county extension office is the best place to ask questions.

Q: What if I don't agree with a policy or procedure and don't want to follow it?

A: State and county policies are in place for many reasons. The policies and procedures are important to insure that 4-H is an inclusive organization and that it is working to educate youth in a safe environment. If you think the policy or procedure violates one of these principles or would like further explanation of a policy or procedure, talk to your county agent.

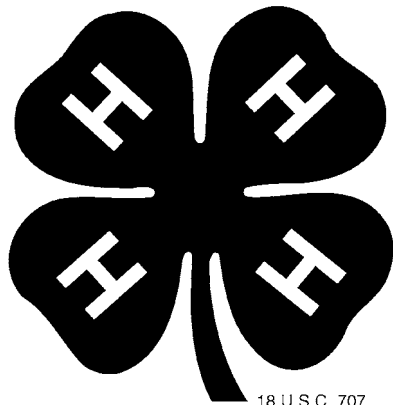
Q: Why are project books and project literature important?

A: Project books and project literature are important to support the mission of educating youth. These materials are based on research and carefully selected by the 4-H Center for Youth Development and other advisory groups.

Check List for Starting a Club

- Contact county office
- Advertise and find interest
- Hold an informational meeting
- Plan and hold the organizational meeting
 - Select a name
 - Enroll members and have leaders complete paperwork for volunteer certification
 - Elect officers
- Plan and hold the second meeting
 - Do a Yearly Plan
 - Complete Bylaws
- Apply for a Charter with the State 4-H office through the county office; remember to attach the Yearly Plan and Bylaws with the Charter Application. (see website, www.montana4h.org, for forms)
- Follow the financial guidelines to set up bank account, if applicable.
- Continue holding meetings and following the Yearly Plan the club put together.
- Help youth with their projects and with keeping records of their project work.
- Celebrate success and recognize the members and leaders for completing their first year.

The Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development hopes this guide gives leaders and parents the confidence to start and manage new 4-H clubs. If you still have questions after reading this guide, and we expect that you will, remember that the county extension staff and other leaders will be continuing resources for you. There are also opportunities on the county and state levels for leaders to participate in training and exchange ideas, so that the 4-H club you are establishing will be a unique entity while creating an environment where youth can master skills, have a sense of belonging, grow in independence and learn generosity in an ever-changing world. Best Wishes for a successful fun-filled first year!!



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4-H Pledge

I pledge

My Head to Clearer Thinking
(right hand points to forehead)



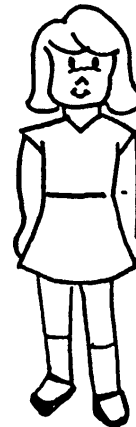
My heart to
Greater Loyalty,
(right hand over heart)



My Hands to
Larger Service
(arms slightly bent, palms up)



and My Health to
Better Living,
(arms at sides)



For My Club, My
Community, My Country,
and My World.



Montana 4-H Center
FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



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