



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

4-H officer and leader training strives to grow stronger 4-H clubs through shared leadership

Positive youth development starts with providing a safe, welcoming environment. 4-H clubs led by caring volunteers are a key component of a successful 4-H program. The [4-H staff serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties](#) led a day-long training to strengthen the local club experience.

Last fall, the 4-H team had the opportunity to facilitate the *Together We Lead 4-H Officer and Leader Training* held at MH Equipment in Peoria. This event brought together 40 participants, including 20 dedicated 4-H adult leaders and 20 youth serving in club officer roles, for a day focused on strengthening leadership skills and enhancing the overall 4-H club experience. Speakers included our Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell 4-H team members, State 4-H staff, and local 4-H volunteers and young adults.

The training emphasized the importance of youth-adult partnerships and provided practical tools that participants could immediately apply in their clubs. The session on Cloverbud programming highlighted developmentally appropriate ways to engage our youngest members while fostering curiosity and a sense of belonging. Leaders and officers also explored the new treasurer and secretary books, building confidence in recordkeeping, financial transparency, and organizational responsibilities essential to strong club operations.

Engagement and connection were key themes throughout sessions such as Making Meetings Fun, Building Belonging in Your Club, and Turning Project Books into Group Adventures. These sessions encouraged creativity, inclusivity, and collaboration, reinforcing that meaningful learning happens when youth feel welcome and excited to participate. The Parliamentary Procedure session helped officers better understand meeting structure, empowering youth to lead discussions and decision-making confidently.

Feedback from the training was overwhelmingly positive. All of the leaders reported feeling more confident in leading their club following the training. Leaders shared that they especially valued the opportunity to learn from one another during roundtable discussions and appreciated gaining awareness of new resources. 4-H officers reported increased confidence in their leadership roles and expressed excitement about implementing new games and activities to make club meetings more engaging.

Throughout the day, youth and adults learned side by side, sharing ideas and experiences that strengthened relationships and leadership capacity. Together We Lead reinforced that effective 4-H clubs are built when youth are empowered, adults are supportive mentors, and everyone works together toward shared goals.



Forty 4-H club officers and leaders participated in the Together We Lead training which focused on empowering youth, supporting the volunteers, building opportunity for mentorships, and working together on a shared goal.

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