



Beyond Ready

Lead, Learn, Thrive

2026 Northern Illinois 4-H Volunteer Training

DeKalb Center for Agriculture

Sycamore, Illinois

September 19, 2026

Conference Schedule:

- **8:30 – 8:55 a.m.** | Check-In, Light Refreshments, and Networking
- **9:00 – 9:15 a.m.** | Welcome
- **9:20 – 10:10 a.m.** | Workshop Session I
- **10:20 – 11:10 a.m.** | Workshop Session II
- **11:20 – 12:10 p.m.** | Workshop Session III
- **12:20 – 12:30 p.m.** | Survey/Evaluation & Adjourn

Workshop Descriptions

Session 1 Workshops

Gardening & Cooking With Your Club

Presenter Nicole Groezinger, 4-H Program Coordinator.

Learn how to bring gardening and fresh food experiences into your 4-H club meetings! This workshop is designed for 4-H volunteers and will provide hands-on ideas for engaging youth in gardening, from planting and growing produce to harvesting and preparing simple foods. Participants will explore fun, age-appropriate activities that can be incorporated into club meetings and help 4-H'ers develop gardening, cooking, and healthy food skills. You'll leave with practical ideas you can use with your club right away. Cloverbud leaders and teens are welcome too. *(Youth leader appropriate) (Cloverbud Leader Appropriate)*

Strengthening your Mentoring Skills

Presenter Kathy Book, 4-H Youth Development Educator

During this session, we will deep dive into what a good mentor looks like. You will leave with skills and ideas to create a welcoming, mentor mindset as you interact with the youth around you. *(Youth leader appropriate) (NEW Leaders)*

Helping new families navigate the exciting world of 4-H

Presenter Michele Aavang, 4-H Youth Development Educator

This workshop is designed to equip you with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively mentor and support newcomers to the 4-H community. 1. Understanding the 4-H Experience 2. Decoding 4-H Terminology 3. Providing Resources and Support 4. Developing Action Plans. *(Cloverbud Leader Appropriate) (NEW Leaders)*

Pause, Breathe, Thrive: Mindfulness Activities for 4-Hers

Presenter Martha Ebbesmeyer, 4-H Youth Development Educator.

Join this session to gain ideas for offering mindfulness activities during your next 4-H meeting. We'll explore activities for youth to practice kindness, create calm, and discover mindful eating. *(Youth leader appropriate)*

Risk Assessment and Response + Hands-Only CPR Training

Presenter Abigail Nelson, 4-H Educator.

Review effective strategies for assessing risk and responding to emergencies in 4-H environments. Participants will also receive hands-only CPR training to build confidence in responding to cardiac emergencies. *(Cloverbud Appropriate) (Youth leader appropriate) (NEW Leaders)*

Session 2 Workshops

Thriving Youth 101

Presenter Kathy Book, 4-H Youth Development Educator

This session is for our newer volunteers or those that would like a refresher. During this session we will review the 4-H Thriving model and how to bring the concepts to your clubs. *(Youth leader appropriate) (Cloverbud Appropriate)*

Supporting the Creating with Building Bricks Project

Presenter Amy Henschen, 4-H Youth Development Senior Program Lead, Evaluation and Staff Development.

Experience the Creating with Building Bricks project and learn how you can use our resource guide to help you run building brick clubs or workshops, or bring fun building activities to your community club!

Food Advocacy in Action

Presenter Mark Becker, 4-H Youth Development Extension Specialist, Food Systems.

Empower youth to become leaders for change in their communities. This session introduces the Illinois 4-H Food Action Academy and explores how volunteers can guide young people in identifying food access challenges, raising awareness, building community partnerships, and developing meaningful service-learning projects. Participants will leave with practical tools and action-planning strategies to support youth-led food advocacy efforts. *(Youth leader appropriate)*

4-H Animal Science Opportunities for All: No Animals Required

Presenter Shelby Carlson, 4-H Youth Development Educator.

The projects that 4-H members can take have changed and evolved over the last 125 years, but animal science remains the largest project area within Illinois. Despite the popularity, this project area may be unrealistic for many members who don't have the space or funds to raise a livestock project. In this workshop, we will explore the animal science opportunities Illinois 4-H offers that don't require members to own an animal, using hands-on experiential learning. *(Youth leader appropriate)*

Tech-Savvy Club Management

Presenter Jodi Baumgartner, 4-H Program Coordinator.

Discover practical ways to integrate technology into your club management and communication strategies. This session will explore the pros and cons of popular communication platforms such as TeamReach, BAND, Spond, and others to help determine what works best for your club. Participants will also learn simple Canva tools for creating engaging social media posts, along with interactive meeting tools like Kahoot! and Jeopardy-style games to boost member participation. We will also review important Facebook privacy settings and safety tools for club groups. Walk away with practical ideas and resources to improve communication, organization, and engagement within your club. *(Youth leader appropriate) (NEW Leaders)*

Session 3 Workshops

Strategies for Starting or Growing Local Cloverbud Programs

Presenter Andrea Farrier, 4-H Youth Development Educator

Learn ideas and strategies for starting or growing a local Cloverbuds program. Explore curriculum, organization, leader support, and more. *(Cloverbud Leader Appropriate) (NEW Leaders)*

Bringing Animal Science Activities to Club Meetings

Presenter Shelby Carlson, 4-H Youth Development Educator.

A vital part of every 4-H club meeting is the educational activity. In this session, we will sample a handful of activities that you can take directly to your 4-H club meeting to get members interested

in animal science projects. Even those members whose interests lie outside of animal science will learn something new! *(Youth leader appropriate)*

First Impressions Matter: Equipping Leaders to Guide Students for Job Interviews

Presenter Martha Ebbesmeyer & Kelly Lafferty, 4-H Youth Development Educators.

Equipping youth with the skills and knowledge needed to make a great first impression is the initial step in helping youth ace their first interview. Join 4-H Youth Development Educators, Martha Ebbesmeyer and Kelly Lafferty, for an active workshop experience and explore activities designed to help build your student's confidence while preparing for an apprenticeship application or a summer job interview. Help youth showcase their skills effectively through preparation and practice with simple, ready-to-use resources. *(Youth leader appropriate)*

Beyond Ready to Lead: Officer Resources and Moodle Courses for Secretaries and Treasurers

Presenter Michele Aavang, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Melissa Irwin, Illinois 4-H Club & Awards Associate.

Explore practical strategies, tools, and resources to help volunteers strengthen their skills and confidence in supporting youth serving in officer roles. Participants will discover best practices, gain new ideas they can immediately implement, and connect learning to the Illinois 4-H experience. Learn how the new self-paced Moodle courses can support Secretary and Treasurer training, and discover how to guide youth in using the Illinois 4-H Secretary and Treasurer resource books. Be Beyond Ready to help club officers develop leadership, organization, and financial management skills that will serve them far beyond 4-H! *(Youth leader appropriate) (NEW Leaders)*

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