Part of Alaska’s communities since 1930, 4-H is the largest youth organization in the country. Youth—grades k-12—learn life skills that bolster strong leadership, healthy self-esteem, responsible citizenship and active community involvement.

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) is a public service educational branch of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. CES takes scientific information from the University and helps Alaskans apply that knowledge at home and on the job.

Mat-Su/Copper River 4-H District
809 S. Chugach, Palmer, AK 99645
Phone: 907-745-3360  Fax -907-745-5479
www.uaf.edu/ces/districts/matsu/
**4-H VALUES**

We, the youth and adults of the 4-H movement, value

- Youth as powerful members of society
- Youth and adults as caring partners
- Learning as a lifelong commitment
- Diversity and social conscience
- Doing our best and making it better

Therefore,

* We believe that youth are powerful members of society, with the ability to contribute significantly to their communities, to create positive change, and to imaging new possibilities and directions.
* We believe that youth are equal and caring partners, bringing unique energy, knowledge and perspective to the work they do—they are keepers of the vision.
* We believe that relationships with caring adults are essential for youth to achieve their potential because of the guidance, respect, knowledge and wisdom adults can share.
* We believe that learning is a lifetime commitment that enhances self-determination, independent thinking, and self-esteem, and that learning-by-doing promotes practical skills, confidence and experience for both youth and adults.
* We believe that a social conscience is built on service and volunteerism, that a commitment to diversity depends on embracing and respecting difference, and that both are essential to making our society a better place.
* We believe that our youth are the future of our nation and our world and that they deserve nothing less than our best. Because we believe in these things, we touch the future through the 4-H youth development movement.

**4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT VISION**

A world in which youth and adults learn, grow and work together as catalysts for positive change.

**4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MISSION**

4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

* 4-H is the only youth program that ties public and private resources—federal, state, and local governments, land-grant colleges and universities and their Cooperative Extension System, schools, 4-H parents, youth, and community-based organizations—to the single purpose of supporting the positive and successful development of youth.
Opportunities
The Mat-Su/Copper River 4-H District offers many activities throughout the year.

Educational opportunities include:
- Horse Symposium in February
- Citizenship Juneau Focus visit
- Livestock Rally Days in June
- Leader training
- Holiday Gingerbread House Contest
- Clinics, workshops and more

Competitions include:
- Horse Quiz Bowl in January
- Baking Contest in the spring
- Presentations and Fashion Revue
- Summer horse shows and gymkhanas
- Shooting Sports classes & competitions
- Record keeping, club, & leadership awards

Fun events include:
- Achievement Night
- Camps
- Trail rides
- Teen Events
- Other activities

Statewide
The size of our state and travel costs makes it difficult to have a lot of statewide events, so we make the best of it when we do.
- Alaska Leaders Forum, usually in April, in Anchorage, is a chance for Leaders to get together for workshops and fun.
- UAF for YOUth is a teen driven legislative project.
- Teen Forum, with leadership workshops and clinics, often held during Leaders Forum.
- The Alaska State Fair offers competitions & special activities for statewide 4-H youth.
- Shooting Sports Leader Training, Fun Match and Competitions,
- Statewide community service ideas,

National 4-H Competitions include:
- Eastern & Western 4-H Round-Ups
- 4-H Forestry Competition
- 4-H Science & Technology Contest
- National Shooting Sports Competitions
- Dairy and other competitions

National Conferences include:
- 4-H Conference in Washington D. C.
- Summer Citizenship Washington Focus
- 4-H Congress in Atlanta, November
- Regional Leaders Conferences
- Special conferences

Other opportunities include:
- National and International youth exchanges, community service connections, grant applications, use of the National 4-H Conference Center, Collegiate 4-H clubs, Alumni groups, 4-H Center Internships and jobs, planning committees and much more. watch the newsletter or check with the Office to find out more. Some activities may have scholarships to help with expenses. We hope that you will take advantage of these opportunities to experience 4-H on a National level and discover more about our fantastic organization!
Welcome to 4-H and our district area of south central Alaska. 4-H has a long history in the area, beginning with the Matanuska colonists in the 1930s. Our district extends to the foothills of Denali to the north, east to the coastal areas of Cordova, Valdez and the Copper River area, south to the boundaries of the Municipality of Anchorage. Our 4-H youth are involved in projects and activities as varied as our landscape, from earthquake safety and wild foods preservation to horses, assistance dogs, arts and crafts and giant cabbages. We’d like to encourage you to find out more about the 4-H program in our district and hopefully choose to join us in our endeavors.

Boys and girls may join 4-H beginning in kindergarten through 12th grade. Kindergarten through 2nd grade youth are called Cloverbuds, and are limited in some project areas, such as horse and large livestock. Standard 4-H is available to 3rd through 12th grade youth. The 4-H year begins October 1 and ends September 30. Youth and their projects need to be enrolled by June 15 of the current year to receive credit for those projects. The steps in joining 4-H are simple. Youth may be enrolled at the 4-H Office in Palmer or by mail. An enrollment card is completed with basic information and project areas, and a small fee is collected to cover registration and insurance. The youth receives a 4-H Membership card, project materials, record book and the monthly newsletter. Help is given in finding a club to join, beginning a new club or assistance as an independent member when distance or other circumstances is a problem. Being part of a 4-H club is an important part of 4-H, members learn leadership skills, teamwork, pride in their club and 4-H and other important benefits. Clubs are often organized by location or member interests and may be specific to only one project or many interests. They may be any size and meet wherever and whenever desired. Starting a club is easy. A club name is chosen, project and enrollment cards filled out, fees paid and project materials ordered. Club leaders and Assistants need to complete an application form or reapplication form each year and attend periodic training. There are many opportunities for leaders, such as the Leaders Advisory Board, Committees, Leaders Forums, and special events planning.

Opportunities for 4-H members abound! Youth may work on organized projects, exhibit at the Alaska State Fair, auction market livestock, participate in horse, dog, demonstrations, speech, fashion and other competitions, attend workshops, clinics, field trips and camps, be club officers, camp counselors and teen leaders, do community service projects, raise funds for special 4-H activities, write newsletter articles, and many other activities. Alaskan 4-H members may also participate in national competitions, 4-H Congress and Conference, Citizen Washington Focus, club exchanges and other exciting opportunities. Many youth use skills gained in 4-H as stepping-stones to other organizations, leadership roles, scholarships, and college and job placement. Alumni of 4-H fill many community roles as teachers, elected officials, business people, and even celebrities. We hope that you will find 4-H as exciting and fulfilling as we all do and choose to join us as part of Mat-Su/Copper River 4-H. For more information, please contact the 4-H Office at 809 S. Chugach St., Palmer, Alaska, 99645, (907) 745-3360, e-mail: dahecimovich@alaska.edu.

**A Typical Year of Mat-Su/Copper River District 4-H**

**October (start of the 4-H year)**
- Achievement Night (Awards)
- Recruitment, Enrollment and club re-organization
- National 4-H Week
- Leaders Training, clinics and workshops start up

**November**
- 4-H Congress (Atlanta, Georgia)
- Leaders Appreciation Dinner

**December**
- Holiday activities
  - January
  - Horse Bowl

**February**
- Western Regional Leaders Forum (various western states)
- Horse Symposium

**March**
- District Baking Contest
- Teen Event in Juneau

**April**
- 4-H Conference (Washington D.C.)
- Alaska Leaders and Teen Forum (Anchorage)

**May**
- District Presentations and Fashion Review Competitions

**June**
- Enrollment deadline for current year
- Livestock Rally Days
- Horse Camps and activities

**July**
- 4-H Camp
- District Horse Show
- Fair ticket requests due

**August**
- Mat-Su/Copper River District Alaska State Fair Invitational
- Livestock Auction

**September**
- Record Books due
- District Awards review and determination
- Get excited for another great year in 4-H!
Fund Raising

Clubs are responsible for paying for their own expenses. A few clubs have dues, but most choose to have occasional fund-raising activities. Ideas include bake sales, car washes, craft sales, food booths, raffles, garage sales and much more. Funds raised must go towards 4-H activities rather than an individual and can be tax deductible. Club treasurers are required to fill out an annual report. If a club disbands, any 4-H funds or equipment must be donated to an existing 4-H club, 4-H Foundation or the Mat-Su/Copper River 4-H Volunteer Leaders Association.

Projects and Records

Most anything a child is interested in can be a 4-H project. Some project areas have more material available than others, and the 4-H Agent is happy to help find additional information. Project materials are usually requested by the Club Leader after enrollment. Record books are required for some projects such as Market Livestock and Gymkhana. These projects also may have additional requirements such as deadline dates, weights, etc, so if you may be interested in a specific project, it is best to check into requirements early in the year. Information is usually available in the newsletter and hopefully on the website soon. Record books are encouraged for most projects as keeping data is an important part of the learning process. Many record books have helped 4-Hers improve long term projects, apply towards school research projects, and aid in scholarship applications, college and employment resumes.

Mention 4-H, and folks immediately think of kids and animals. But this is only one small part of 4-H, there is a wide array of projects and activities to be involved with. Listed below is a partial list of interesting and exciting 4-H projects. The possibilities are endless!


What's in the guidebook?

This booklet is designed to help you understand more about the 4-H program in our district and how to get started as a leader or member. This does not replace the required Leader Training. For additional information or questions not covered, please contact the CES office at 745-3360.

4-H is the only youth program that ties public and private resources-federal, state, and local governments, land-grant colleges and universities and their Cooperative Extension System, schools, 4-H parents, youth, and community-based organizations—to the single purpose of supporting the positive and successful development of youth.

4-H is the youth development organization affiliated with the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. In 2002, 4-H celebrated its 100th birthday and has been active in Alaska since 1930. Nationwide, there are almost 7 million members and 60 million alumni. Another 4 million youth are involved in similar programs in over 60 countries. Over half of the members live in large cities or suburbs and 30% are from racial or ethnic minority groups. Youth from kindergarten through 12th grade participate in a vast array of projects and activities, from aquaculture to zoology. "Learning by Doing" is a 4-H motto and children learn and practice life skills that prepare them in leadership, citizenship, community service, public speaking, individual project skills and much more. The mission of 4-H, from its 2001 Strategic Plan, is to empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

In Alaska, 4-H members participate in a wide variety of projects, from traditional areas such as horse, gardening and foods to snowboarding, sailing, dog mushing and cultural awareness. Most youth are part of a 4-H club, though there are others which participate as part of an after school or home school group. In the Mat-Su/Copper River District, which includes the Borough, east to Glennallen and Valdez, 4-H members are involved in horse, livestock, gardening, crafts, foods, dogs, shooting sports, outdoor recreation and many other areas. A member or club can be involved in a project for a short amount of time or on a long-term continuous basis.
So Why Join?

With all of the exciting things for kids to be involved with, why join 4-H?

Studies have shown that youth active in 4-H have better school success and are less likely to get involved in harmful activities. 4-H involvement exposes youth to a wide variety of experiences, leadership opportunities, community service, scholarships, travel, project and life skills. In addition to educationally sound curricula and functional, experiential-based teaching techniques, 4-H has a rich heritage with many time-honored traditions as well as fun.

The 4-H Emblem; the green four-leaf clover with a white “H” on each leaf, representing Head, Heart, Hands Health, further promotes positive youth involvement. The white color symbolizes purity and green represents life, growth and youth. The 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,” is further explained below.

Head

4-H will get the youth thinking. They’ll learn how to think as team members and to work with each other to accomplish their goals. They will discover the world around them. 4-H offers them a chance to build the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to be strong, self-directed, productive adults. They’ll find new ways to see the world and to see themselves.

Heart

It can be tough growing up today. To sort out their thoughts, ideas and emotions, youth can talk with 4-H members and leaders about what is important to them. They find that others involved in 4-H feel the same way they do. In 4-H, they develop relationships with other young people and with adults. They form lasting friendships and make cherished memories.

Hands

In 4-H, youth will participate in fun activities and learn skills they can use for the rest of their lives—on the job, at home or with their friends. 4-Hers work to improve their communities, share their skills and ideas with others and get hands-on experience for the future. They will learn new skills and explore careers that interest them.

Health

4-H helps youth learn to make healthful choices about exercise and eating. Being healthy means feeling good inside and outside, with school, friends and family. In 4-H, they will learn how to develop a healthy lifestyle, and they will understand the consequences of unhealthy decisions. Their physical and emotional well-being are important and in 4-H they can achieve their fullest potential.

Why be a Leader?

Youth need positive caring role models to share their skills and hobbies with them. If you like working with youth, have something to teach or share, 4-H is a great place to volunteer. Leaders receive liability coverage through the University and are eligible for training at district, state, regional and national levels. Leaders may also join district committees to help with decision-making and activity planning. Current committees include: Horse, Livestock, Home & Family and Volunteer Leaders Association. Others may be formed as interest and members availability.

Leaders may be Organizational Leaders who lead clubs, Project Leaders who lead a project or variety of projects or a Resource Leader, who is available as a reference or for a specific activity. Clubs may also have teen leaders who help with club projects and activities.

How to Start a Club?

Perspective leaders must fill out leader application forms which are updated yearly. A required Leader Training should be scheduled with the 4-H Agent sometime during the first year of leadership. A background check is also required and updated every three years. Upon approval, leaders meet with interested youth and decide on a club name, projects, activities, meeting times and elect club officers as needed. Clubs with young children may choose not to have officers until they are older. The National 4-H Headquarters instituted nationwide requirements regarding club chartering in 2008. Leaders will learn more about these requirements during training. Clubs may be specific to certain projects, such as horse, or open to a variety of projects. Due to safety issues, Cloverbud members may not have large animal projects. Once projects are chosen, leaders complete a publications request form to order project materials. Some projects have more publications available than others. Clubs may also choose to meet only a short time, for a specific activity, seasonally or year-around. The 4-H year is from October 1 through September 31, and most clubs plan their year accordingly. Most clubs plan at least one community service project, create a sign or banner, keep project records, participate in state fair events as well as many other activities.

Enrollment

Current enrollment fees are $10. Fees cover basic insurance, some publications and materials, and some costs towards pins and ribbons. Enrollment cards are filled out annually, listing member project areas. Upon enrollment, members receive the monthly newsletter, and may participate in club, district, state and national 4-H activities. At this time, there is no enrollment fee for leaders, although leaders involved with horse projects may choose additional insurance for $2.