

4-H Club arrives in Calexico to charter new chapter

By WILLIAM ROLLER, Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, September 1, 2016 12:40 am

CALEXICO — The 4-H Club's origins are rooted in agriculture and animal science but it is much more than the California Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta as the UCCE-Imperial County Youth Development Program arrived here after an absence of 20 years to spread the fun of its diverse projects of robotics, photography, gardening and a hundred other programs they share with youths.

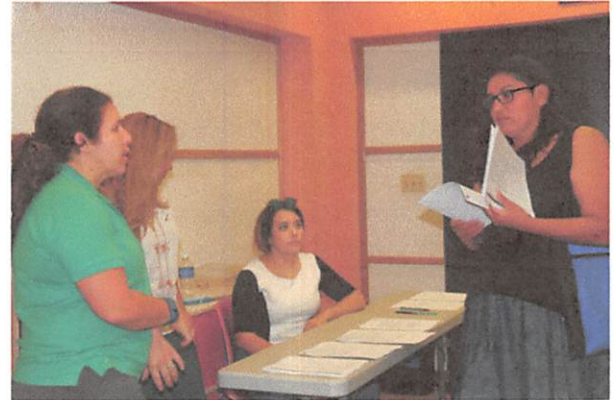
After two decades of missing in the wilderness, 4-H returns to Calexico thanks to support of John Renison, District 1 supervisor, and the rest of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors who put up \$10,000 to get the Calexico chapter going. Orientation for community and project leaders along with new members took place at the Camarena Library here on Wednesday.

Programs are manned each year by 270 adult volunteers but what really touches the youths are the project leaders, noted Shanna Abatti, continuation education specialist for the UCCE-IC 4-H. The club has had been in the county since 1914, starting with the Holtville chapter.

“The 4-H Club is youth-led, you don't just learn but learn by doing,” said Abatti. “Our motto: make the best better. We need adult officers but it's youth leaders who instruct.”

The first meeting of the Calexico chapter will be Sept. 19 at the Camarena Library, 850 Encinas Ave. Those interested can email Abatti at smabatti@ucanr.edu or call 760-352-9474 for times. The first day promises to be fun as they elect officers and form a constitution and bylaws, and it is all youth-led.

At Wednesday's orientation meeting Carlos Lopez, a Calexico High School student, arrived to support his 6-year-old sister Victoria Arredondo. Carlos has previously raised a goat and chickens at the fair. Although he did not commit as a project leader he recalled how much he enjoyed his experience raising livestock.



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Shanna Abatti and Araceli Villanueva, 4-H Club board members talk with potential leader Carmina Ramirez. WILLIAM ROLLER PHOTO

Carmina Ramirez, a teacher, has not been involved with 4-H but she was curious to learn more of what it is really about. She expressed an interest in starting a community garden as an after-school project for 4-H.

Working in a variety of capacities, support leader Millie Spaugh told the audience about her experience in arts and crafts, baking and now she is having fun leading a sewing project.

Attending IVC as a psychology major, Melissa Saucedo recalled how much she enjoyed helping student with homework and English as a second language when she volunteered for Imperial County Office of Education's After School Education and Safety program last year.

"I'd like to work in 4-H so I can incorporate my hobby, drawing into training young people in a useful skill," said Saucedo. "I'd enjoyed working with ASES but I didn't get to share with kids what I'm passionate about."

One of the challenges to attract adult leaders to 4-H is they do not think they have the time to commit to projects yet it is a lot less time consuming than they suspect, typically six hours a month, noted Abatti.

"What are you good at and can teach others?" Abatti asked. "Adults provide the spark, share their experience then let youth explore and discover what they like to do."