

FARM: Volunteers are the heart of 4-H

By Shanna Abatti, Special to this Newspaper | Posted: Friday, November 24, 2017 12:10 am

As we show thanks for family, friends, and for the food on our table today, I want to take this time to thank the 280 men and women throughout Imperial County who volunteer to lead projects and programs within our local 4-H Youth Development program. They have a passion for impacting local youth in a positive way and ultimately helping each and every one of them grow into a caring, competent and contributing citizen.

A 4-H leader comes in many forms and can give back in a big way with very little effort. 4-H teaches life skills through hands-on projects.

Leaders give youth an opportunity to grow with as little as 6 hours of project time a year. For example: if you are an adult volunteer who has an interest in hiking, a 4-H project for the youth could be as simple sending a short email to all youth interested letting them know the details of the hike and what to bring. For a project to count it must be 6 hours of education, which can be easily accomplished on one hike. Helping youth complete a simple project report and voila, you have a fun, educational, and meaningful project.

You don't have to have any special talents or knowledge, only enthusiasm and a desire to make a positive impact in a child's life. There are so many ways to volunteer with 4-H. Community club leaders help 4-H members run their club. They relay information, collect paperwork, and inspire and motivate our members and other leaders to do great things! Project leaders teach our members about their projects. For example, they provide instruction in things like shooting sports, robotics, dogs, leatherwork, cooking and so much more. If you have an interest and skill in a particular educational area, we likely have a need for you. Club, activity and event helpers. Sometimes we need volunteers to help us out with a club, or county event. This can include everything from bringing snacks to a 4-H meeting to working at a concession stand during a livestock show. We are always in need of an extra set of hands. Chaperones supervise 4-H members on trips to make sure that they have a fun, safe, learning experience. County council members help guide the 4-H program each year. Currently we are seeking a new treasurer (accountant).

Other opportunities for volunteers include working on state advisory committees and curriculum committees. These committees oversee specific programs and provide valuable input to



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curriculum, guidelines for projects and statewide events. Imperial County currently has 13 youth and adults sitting on these statewide advisory committees.

Volunteers are the HEART of the 4-H program. For that, I am truly grateful. Imperial County 4-H would not be as successful as it is without these dedicated, caring adults who continue to foster life skills in our local youth. 4-H Youth Development volunteers are valued partners in working with youth and the University of California Cooperative Extension staff. Imperial County 4-H is committed to providing safe places and caring adults who build caring relationships with young people. If you would like to know about 4-H, or how you can give back to the program that has helped so many local youth grow, please contact Shanna Abatti 442-265-7700 or smabatti@ucanr.edu