

Ohio State University Extension & the County Junior Fair: Partners and their Respective Roles

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Ohio State University Extension and Junior Fair Overview

Young people want to be engaged in positive activity that helps them develop a sense of responsibility and build self-esteem. The Junior Fair is a successful learning laboratory that enhances youth development using a hands-on approach. Ohio State University Extension is committed to continued 4-H member participation in Junior Fairs because of the opportunities to:

- Extend each 4-H member's (and volunteer's) learning opportunities related to the specific project and development/enhancement of life skills;
- Evaluate the level of each 4-H member's accomplishments in both competitive and non-competitive events;
- Recognize 4-H members; and
- Showcase Ohio State University Extension and Ohio 4-H Youth Development.

Junior fair is one of the major components of most county and independent fairs. 4-H Youth Development is one of several youth organizations involved or potentially involved in junior fairs. Furthermore, we all recognize the Agricultural Society does not manage or conduct the Ohio State University Extension 4-H program nor does Ohio State University Extension 4-H manage the Agricultural Society or conduct junior fairs. Ohio State University Extension personnel serve as a resource for the total fair, as well as leadership for 4-H's involvement in junior fairs.

Partner Roles

There is no one OSU Extension/4-H Youth Development and Agricultural Society agreement that applies to all county and independent fairs. However, the following description of partner roles regarding junior fairs was developed to strengthen working relationships and ensure positive experiences for youth participants and their families. A Junior Fair Committee and Junior Fair Board are also included as critical partners for an effective junior fair program.

Roles of Ohio State University Extension/4-H Youth Development

1. Provide support of and a positive attitude toward fairs.
2. Design educational opportunities for 4-H members.
3. Maximize the opportunities of the junior fair environment to teach and demonstrate improved ideas and practices related to specific project areas and leadership development.
4. Provide leadership and organizational counsel/advice on:
 - a. Ideas and organizational guidelines for the Agricultural Society.
 - b. Junior Fair Committee and assisting with Junior Fair Board.

- c. Adult and youth training in leadership skills, organization, communications and public relations, etc.
- d. Designing and managing programs to encourage 4-H members and volunteers to excel, learn, grow, and have fun through:
 - Non-competitive and competitive events.
 - Incentives for youth to develop desire, confidence, new knowledge and skills, and personal development.
 - Involvement of volunteers, Junior Leaders and Junior Fair Board members.
5. Serve as one of the advisors to the Junior Fair Board and serve on the Junior Fair Committee of the Senior Fair Board.
6. Be responsible for the 4-H portion of the junior fair program book including appropriate classes and activities which meet the objectives of the 4-H program but are conducted at the fair. This portion of the book will be submitted to the Senior Fair Board for approval.
7. Recommend judges and types of recognition such as ribbons, trophies, and trips.
8. Assist with preparing the junior fair budget request, and guidance on financial management and accountability; however, this should not include custodial responsibility for any funds generated in support of junior fair activities.
9. Work with the Junior Fair Board members to fulfill their leadership responsibilities.
10. Communicate information to members, volunteers, and parents.
11. Organize and manage the program specifically for 4-H and assist through leadership and guidance with those events.
12. Assist as appropriate with other junior fair and/or senior fair activities as time and expertise permit.

Role of Senior Fair Board/Agricultural Societies

1. Provide support of and a positive attitude toward the objectives of the different junior fair youth programs.
2. Responsible for the overall management for the county fair.
3. Appoint and maintain a Junior Fair Committee to work with all youth groups involved in fair activities through an active Junior Fair Board.
4. Provide financial management of all activities related to the junior fair including collection, deposit, and payment of any funds as appropriate for:
 - a. Judges and other junior fair employees.
 - b. Ribbons, trophies, premiums, and other awards.
 - c. Junior fair sales.
 - d. Facilities and maintenance.
 - e. Financial management of the junior fair.
5. Final approval of all rules (in alignment with respective youth organizations) related to junior fair activities, shows, and sales, etc., as recommended by the Junior Fair Committee and Junior Fair Board.
6. Approve and support junior fair activities.
7. Involve Ohio State University Extension personnel in decisions that affect participation of 4-H youth and adults such as fair passes, premiums, exhibit housing, show schedules, and facility usage.
8. Provide and maintain adequate facilities for junior fair events.

9. Maintain control of scheduling, maintenance and improvements of the fair facilities on a year-round basis even though 4-H members and adults may have been instrumental in constructing or improving those facilities.
10. Employ or recruit a volunteer to serve as a junior fair coordinator to assist in the management and implementation of the junior fair program.

Role of Junior Fair Committee

The Junior Fair Advisory Committee is appointed by the Senior Fair Board and includes Senior Fair Board members, Ohio State University Extension personnel, the county school superintendent, and representatives of other youth programs who participate in the Junior Fair Division.

1. Provide support of and a positive attitude toward the objectives of the different junior fair youth programs, including effective leadership development opportunities for Junior Fair Board members.
2. Committee members work with the Junior Fair Board to develop the Junior Fair Division of the fair and report directly to the county or independent Senior Fair Board.
3. Junior Fair Committee works cooperatively with all youth groups participating in the Junior Fair Division.
4. The Junior Fair Committee should work closely with the Junior Fair Board to develop recommendations for all operations of the Junior Fair Division.
5. Provide support to Junior Fair Board and serve as liaison with Senior Fair Board.

Role of County Junior Fair Board

1. Provide support of and a positive attitude toward the objectives of the different junior fair youth programs.
2. Provide leadership to the development and implementation of the junior fair program.
3. The Junior Fair Board is organized with representation from junior fair youth group participants.
4. The Junior Fair Board in consultation with the Junior Fair Committee will submit plans, budget, and financial accounting for audit to the Senior Fair Board.
5. The Junior Fair Board is responsible and accountable to the Senior Fair Board.

“The educational mission of 4-H and the competitive aspect of fairs are so often blurred, and have been blurred from almost the beginning. Every 4-H Extension professional over the years has spent many hours distinguishing between the two to clientele. Quite frankly, they have not made much headway. But we all must constantly and consistently share the message to keep separate the educational and competitive aspects of our youth development organization. Every once in a while we create an informed convert.”

**Created for the OFMA Convention on January 4, 2005 by Keith L. Smith, director of OSU Extension, and Jeff King, state 4-H leader at the time. Updated by Tom Archer for OFMA on January 7, 2011.*