5-1990

4-H 323 On the Charts - 4-H Marketing Hits

Keith Martikainen

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/a4hhistory

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/a4hhistory/375

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 4-H Youth Development at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Nebraska 4-H Clubs: Historical Materials and Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
On The Charts -

4-H Marketing Hits

Help, I Need Somebody!

Produced by Keith Martikainen
Extension 4-H Youth Specialist

May 1990
CONTENTS

**Putting Together Your Top 40 Show** ............................................. 1
Background plans and general tips for marketing.

**Let Them See Your Call Letters** .................................................. 3
Keeping 4-H in front of the public.

**Setting Up Remote Broadcasts** .................................................... 5
Some basics for exhibits and displays.

**Extra! Extra! Read All About It!** ................................................... 7
Working with newspapers.

**Let's Get Visual** ................................................................. 10
Using slides, videotape and T.V.

**Taking Care of Business** .......................................................... 11
How to develop promotional partnerships in the community.

**Help, I Need Somebody!** ........................................................... 12
Involving others in marketing.

**From the Bottom of My Heart.** ................................................... 15
Letting others know that they're appreciated.

**Closing the Show** ................................................................. 16
"Yah, but..." vs. "Try it 'n see."
PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR **TOP 40 SHOW**

**Identify your target audience.** There’s no such thing as the general public. Kids have different interests than adults. Young children are fascinated by things that bore teens. Retired folks may help with short term projects but not long term commitments. First, determine who you want to reach and then the best way to do it. Most children don’t read the newspaper so you won’t reach them unless an adult passes the word along. Try to appeal to all and you’ll probably appeal to none.

**Market in three steps.** Marketing doesn’t have to be complicated. In fact, basic marketing consists of just three steps. First, identify your audience. Then, develop your marketing package, and finally make your presentation. Each of these components is covered elsewhere in this paper. Remember: Target, Package and Present.

**Plan time for promotion.** Make public relations an important part of your Plan of Work. Much of what a 4-H professional does relates to public relations—recruiting volunteers, writing news releases or soliciting support. Plan your PR work and work your plan.

**KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid).** Make sure you’re not trying to include too much in your brochure or flyer. It’s usually a good idea to do a draft that includes everything you want to say and then cut 90 percent of it. Use some graphics and leave plenty of white space. If your brochure looks too busy many people won’t bother to read it.

**Hold a 4-H PR contest.** Most young people love to compete. One county added a poster contest to their achievement banquet to give the younger members something to win. The posters followed a theme and after they were judged they went in store windows to promote 4-H. Everyone received a ribbon and the best posters in each age group received a small cash prize. Money is still a great incentive.
It pays to advertise. But, advertising also costs. Don’t expect to do much without money. Earmark some money just for promotion. Consider doing some sort of fund raising activity for the purpose of raising money to promote 4-H. A quality promotional campaign suggests a quality program. You won’t be able to do everything the first year. But, if you add something new each year before long you’ll have everything you need.

Read Communication Briefings for great marketing ideas. It’s a little expensive at $59 for 12 issues but the eight pages each month are packed full of useful tips and it’s a quick read. Write for a sample copy to P.O. Box 587, Glassboro, NJ 08028.

Keep your cool. If the media don’t do a good job for you, don’t get nasty! Meet with those who receive your releases and ask how you can help them do a better job. This should help you achieve the best possible success of getting your news printed or on the air. If you think you’ve got a problem now, try making someone mad.

Use your 4-H Newsletter to reach others. Send a copy to local political figures, either annually or on an ongoing basis. Be sure to send a short cover letter the first time (or each time if it’s only sent sporadically) to explain that it’s sent to keep them up to date on youth development programs for their clientele.

Explain what 4-H is and who it reaches. Develop a short fact sheet which tells the emphasis and size of your program. This can then go with every youth material request received by your office. People don’t know if you’re reaching one hundred or five hundred young people in twenty or two hundred families, or in what parts of the county unless you tell them. How many times have you heard, "I wish I could have been in 4-H but we lived in town"?

Help them find you. Include a brief map in brochures to highlight the location of your particular event or your office.

Provide a tip of the day or week. A very basic answering machine on the office direct line with a recorded message can answer the most commonly asked question for the week, or promote an upcoming program with date, time and audience. A lot can be said in thirty seconds or less. If you mention a Fact Sheet, be sure to tell support staff to expect requests.
LET THEM SEE YOUR CALL LETTERS

T-shirts, T-shirts, T-shirts! 4-H is sometimes difficult to identify because members aren’t wearing uniforms. Consider giving t-shirts instead of trophies for recognition. Kids love t-shirts and while they’re wearing the one you gave them they’re advertising 4-H. There are lots of choices in the 4-H Catalog or design your own.

Learn to silk screen. One of the greatest things one county ever thought of was having campers bring one or more t-shirts to camp to be printed by volunteers. They did nearly two hundred shirts in a couple of hours for less than $50. You can also make great posters by silk screening. The screen is simple to make using a photographic process similar to developing photos. The hardest thing about silk screening is cleaning up when you’re done.

Set a good example. If you want 4-H’ers and leaders to wear 4-H t-shirts, hats and pins, wear some yourself. "Do as I do" always works better than "do as I say." The 4-H Catalog has added some new 4-H fashions in recent years. At the very least you should always have a 4-H pin on when you’re on the job in public.

Is 4-H going places in your county? Bumper stickers, license plates and window decals are still great ideas. Hold a contest to see which club can get the highest percentage of family cars wearing the 4-H clover. Do you have a 4-H clover on your car?

Make 4-H easy to find in The Book. Take a look at your telephone book. Is 4-H listed in the white pages as Four-H and in the yellow pages under youth organizations? I wonder how many parents call Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts when they couldn’t find 4-H listed. People new to 4-H won’t think to look for Cooperative Extension or the University.

Don’t be anonymous. If you use return cards or registration forms, make sure the return address includes your name. People feel more comfortable dealing with other people, rather than an organization.

Take 4-H to the drive-in. If you still have family oriented drive-ins or movie theaters in your area, ask if they would include a 4-H promotion at intermission. It might be just a slide that gives the 4-H office number or a series of slides that show what 4-H’ers do. Maybe you could use some 4-H’ers to make a short video to recruit new members. Don’t forget the local channel on cable.
**How about having a County 4-H week?** Do some of the same things you’d do for National 4-H Week, but at a different time of year. Fly a 4-H flag at the courthouse or at some of the schools. Ask the businesses with message boards to include something about 4-H. If the businesses that support 4-H use billboards, ask if they’d be willing to put a "We support 4-H" strip at the bottom.

**Make every week National 4-H Week.** Wouldn’t it be great if 4-H got as much exposure the other 51 weeks of the year? It may not be possible to do it every week, but how about something once a month or even once every couple of months. Pick a time when there’s not much going on so that the media are looking for stories. Plan an event for the primary purpose of promoting 4-H. One county held an event in early March called 4-H Winterfair at the local mall. Clubs had display tables, 4-H’ers gave demonstrations and used lots of exhibits showing what the 4-H’ers had made, learned or raised.

**Promote consistently.** Promote consistently with name tags, portable I.D. signs, and any printed materials. Use a uniform logo when promoting the county program.

**Promote constantly.** You can put 4-H everywhere. Look at everything you present to 4-H’ers, leaders, donors and supporters. Order items so you have them all year around. You can put 4-H on wall calendars, desk calendars, local community events schedules, rulers, balloons of all shapes and sizes, beach balls, candy, post-it notes, cups, can holders, program folders, three-ring binders, key rings, removable decals, hats and banners. There are even license plate holders which could go on your cars.

**A 4-H family lives here.** Don’t underestimate the value of identifying where 4-H families live. Lots of 4-H signs on doors, gates and fences signal 4-H is an active organization. There are signs available in the 4-H Catalog or have members make their own. Hold a contest to see who can create the best sign or which club has the most signs. Be creative.

**Try the Burma Shave way.** Some of the most creative advertising ever done was by a shaving cream company using small road signs with clever rhymes. If it’s legal in your area (some states have strict laws about what’s permitted along the road) and if you have a 4-H booster with property along a busy road, write a catchy jingle and have fun. "4-H is great . . . for boys and girls . . . from 18 to 8 . . . "
Promote 4-H in a big way. Millions of people read billboards everyday. It’s often cost prohibitive for 4-H to rent the space and design the art work, but maybe you can get someone else to pay for it. Ask the bank or business who already supports 4-H if they’d be willing to underwrite the cost of a 4-H billboard with a "Compliments of" banner at the bottom. If they won’t go for that, ask if they’d include a "We support 4-H" strip at the bottom of their billboard. Either way, you can get 4-H up there for all to see.

SETTING UP REMOTE BROADCASTS

Keep posters simple. When creating posters, keep the message simple, including only the necessary information. Display the poster where people gather often, such as check-out lines, at the coffee or copy machines, etc. You may need to be creative with size and shape.

Use line drawings in brochures. Your finished product will look better and be more instructive with good clip art instead of photographs and it won’t look out-dated as quickly.

Clip your own. You get stuff everyday that includes line drawings, graphics and other art work. Clip what appeals to you and organize it by subject. How many times have you spent hours looking through clip art files to find that perfect picture? Start collecting your own clip art and you’ll save a lot of time in the long run. (Beware of licensed trademarks.)

Know your colors. When preparing brochures and flyers, think about color. Some color combinations are easier to read than others. For many people black on yellow easiest. Orange on yellow is almost impossible. Generally, contrasting color combinations work the best. Many people feel it’s best to stick to black, brown, or dark blue print.

Have display - will travel. How many times could you have promoted 4-H if you had an attractive display available? Try to have at least two sizes of displays available; one to fit on a six foot table and another large enough to be used in a mall or exhibit hall. Be creative - some of the best exhibits are put together for very little money. Keep the message simple, use bold colors and lots of pictures. If you don’t have large photos consider make a collage. Include some National 4-H Council posters from the past and present and work in some items 4-H’ers have made.

Use mini-posters. These 8 1/2" X 11" posters are also called counter. Laminate one of your program brochures and develop your own stand or order blank stands. These can then be distributed to businesses and offices requested by your target audience.
Give your displays longer life. Your pictures and posters will stay nice looking longer if you store them in an artist’s portfolio or a box that poster board came in. Mount the posters with double stick tape or rubber cement onto display boards (mat board) found at art supply stores and then attach the board to the frame with velcro, available by the yard or foot at most department stores or fabric shops.

Make your display multipurpose. Several smaller individual pictures and headings with velcro backings make a display more flexible. Your general 4-H display can then easily become a 4-H camping or school enrichment display just by adding or removing individual sections.

4-H marks the spot. There are lots of kids who use the public libraries after school until mom or dad gets home. Librarians give away thousands of book marks to these young readers. Create a 4-H book mark and keep your libraries well stocked. Keep the message simple and don’t forget to include your name and a telephone number. Libraries are also great places to have 4-H displays with lots of pictures of people and activities.

Send 4-H to school. There’s no better place to recruit new 4-H members than in school - especially elementary schools. Ask if you can place a 4-H display in the school library or some other prominent location for a week or more. Make sure your display shows kids having lots of fun and doing interesting things. The photos should speak for themselves without captions to explain what’s going on. Find out if you can send a 4-H brochure home with each student. This is the least expensive way of getting the 4-H message into a lot of homes. To make it easy for the school to distribute, count out the correct number for each classroom and attach the name of the teacher to each bundle. Keep in mind that direct mail (of which this is a type) usually only yields a return of one to three percent.
Give something away. If you want people to stop by your booth or exhibit at the fair, expo or whatever, give away something of value. Make sure it has the 4-H emblem and a telephone number on it. The item doesn’t have to be expensive but should be useful. Another trick is to have some free food such as popcorn or maybe helium filled balloons for the kiddies.

Connect your display. Quite often stores and classrooms emphasize something you can relate to. Many stores and schools would love to have a display with green clovers close to St. Patrick’s Day, a 4-H poultry display near Thanksgiving, or a tastefully done 4-H swine project display near Easter.

Have a 4-H window display contest. Have clubs place 4-H window displays in their communities during National 4-H Week or any other time. Suggest a theme, give some basic guidelines, encourage the use of motion and color and award a prize to the best displays. Give everyone in the winning club a 4-H t-shirt instead of a trophy.

Make an exhibit survival kit. If you do many exhibits put together a tool box stocked with tape (scotch, double stick, masking, electrical and duct), thumb tacks, staplers (staple gun, staple pliers and conventional), extra staples for each type stapler, assorted markers, utility knives, scissors, an adjustable wrench, a hammer, screwdriver with changeable tips, a t-square, stencils, rubber cement, white glue, rubber bands, paper clips, name tags, assorted index cards, a level, clear fishing line and anything else you can think of. With all this stuff you can repair, adapt or create just about anything. If you have a kit you won’t have to run around collecting everything at the last minute.

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT

Know who calls the shots. Since you’ll usually have to depend on PSA’s (public service announcements) for promoting your events, make sure you know what the editors, reporters and news writers want. Determine deadlines, formats and lengths. Will they occasionally send someone to report on your event or will you always need to send them the information? Will they print your photographs? Will they run feature stories?

Make a friend at the paper (or radio station, etc.). Make sure you know someone who will give your stuff special attention. Mail your PSA’s to them, not just to the office. Media people move around a lot. Make sure your mailing list is current.
Use a name, not just a title. Newspaper staffs change, but if you want material used, address it to the current editor by name and title.

News story format is an Inverted triangle. Remember: A newspaper is more likely to use your information if they do not have to rewrite it. Submitting it in the proper format will increase the chances of your information making it into the newspaper!

Localize news releases. If you send news releases to more than one newspaper, try to put a sentence or two into it which ties the release to a local person, place or event. The computer makes this easy and not too time consuming.

Put a clover in the picture. When you take pictures for news articles, make sure there's a clover visible. Most people recognize the emblem and if they don't read the caption they'll still get the message that those in the pictures are 4-H'ers. Don't count on the kids having something with the clover on it. If they do have something, it will often be dirty, lost or outgrown. Take along some one-size-fits-all items like caps or an assortment of sizes of t-shirts and jackets. You can also use pins and patches. Patches can be attached with double stick carpet tape long enough for the photo to be taken.

Plan on a holiday plus one day. Have news releases arrive at the media office the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc. These are often slow news days. It's often easier to get items into print or on the air those days.

Provide fillers. Papers often need short one or two paragraph items to balance their column spaces. Periodically send a sheet of such seasonal or timeless items. Include a cover letter explaining the purpose of the items. These are great for association and business newsletters as well.

Develop a news photo library. Take some good 5" x 7" black and white photos and keep them on hand for when you don't have time to write a news article. A good picture with a long caption will often reach more people than a story or column. Avoid stiff (posed) photos and get up close. You really don't need to show their feet. Take several shots at different angles.
Do It in the dark! It’s gotten very expensive and often quite slow to get black and white film processed. You may want to consider doing your own. It’s easier than you think and doesn’t require a lot of space or equipment. Your photos will usually be better too because you’ve custom processed them and fixed most of your mistakes. You don’t need a permanent darkroom - most bathrooms will work, or even a storage room at the office. It takes about a half hour to develop the film and with a little practice, just minutes to make prints.

Hire your own personal photo developer. Some smaller newspapers will develop your film and select what they want. (This could be a problem if you want to send prints to other papers.) You can make good black and white prints from color prints and negatives with the right equipment. Fine out if your paper will accept color. Or, how about that 4-H teen who’s working toward a trip to National 4-H Congress. Being the chief county 4-H photographer would look good in anyone’s record. As a last resort, there’s always Polaroid, if your paper will accept it. Polaroid picture quality is not the best but may work.

Be a feature writer. Most 4-H agents get in the rut of writing weekly columns or pretty dull event news. When you’re in a creative mood, sit down and write a list of ideas for feature stories. Do some ahead and you’ll always have something for the paper, even if there’s no event to report that week.

Feature a Leader or Junior Leader. Having leaders and junior leaders fill out a short biographical form at the start of the year may be all you need for feature article material. If you can obtain a black and white photo or negative of them, great! You can develop feature articles around their hobbies, projects, work, family, or almost anything. This might go into your column, but keep it separate if possible. This will provide some recognition as well as keeping the 4-H name in front of the public. We suggest that they be prefaced with a statement that this is one of several 4-H people to be featured. Don’t list them as the top or outstanding person. The resulting hard feelings may outweigh the recognition.

Develop a Snoop Crew. A group of 4-H’ers writing articles and taking pictures are often used at the fair. Why not expand that to other events throughout the year? Often the local newspaper will even provide some basic training to these stringers. If they do, be sure to give the newspaper credit.
LET'S GET VISUAL

Keep your slide shows current. Every 4-H agent should keep at least two slide/tape shows ready to use. Have one for adults and one for kids. Keep them short - no more than ten or twelve minutes. Have the one for the kids feature fun and the one for adults feature the learning of life skills and the need for volunteers. Have an interesting script with background music. If possible, have a tape with silent cues so it's just a matter of turning the machine on. With this set-up, anyone can do a good job promoting 4-H. Recruit some members and leaders to make the presentations.

Put it on tape. Convert your frequently used slide/tape programs to VHS video tape. Many people have home video players today but few have slide projectors. If you have a video camera you can convert the slides yourself using an inexpensive adaptor. Most film processors offer the service but it's a little expensive. Having programs on video makes them more difficult to update, but much easier to duplicate.

Use a Pro to shoot your TV PSA. For as little as $200 you can hire a professional videographer to shoot and edit your thirty second PSA. The quality will be equal to many paid commercials and the television station will run it longer and more often because it's of good quality. Don't waste your time using a home video camera unless you are very good and have first rate equipment. You may be able to get the television station to shoot your PSA for free, but generally they won't be willing to do multiple takes to get just the right shot the way someone you've hired will. Also, if you're paying for something, you have some control over the final product. You won't have that control at most television stations.

Ask for the raw tape. When the local television station does a piece on one of your 4-H'ers for whatever reason, ask for a copy of all the tape shot. They may use 15 seconds on air while they actually shoot much more than that. These may easily be re-edited for a variety of 4-H PSA's and provide possible future training materials at low cost. It might also be part of an achievement night program, as a tribute to 4-H activities during the year.
Try a video report. The quality of home cameras and the ease of simple editing can make a video report viable to most programs. Whether it's a presentation to prospective donors or your Extension board, a brief video can do a lot for the 4-H program.

Use 4-H PSA's to educate the community. If you want to get extra mileage from your video PSA's, have 4-H'ers make presentations of useful information such as bike or fire safety. Television stations will run these PSA's longer and more often if there's a good message - not just "4-H is great" or "Join 4-H and have fun."

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Let Welcome Wagon greet newcomers to 4-H. If your community has Welcome Wagon, make sure you keep them supplied with current information about your 4-H program. Make sure the new folks know they're welcome to become involved in 4-H.

Provide 4-H stuffers. Ask your local banks, utility companies and anyone else that does mass mailings if you can occasionally include some 4-H information in their envelopes. Create a small one page flyer the size of their envelope to avoid extra postage. Use a bright color and include something of general interest like a seasonal recipe to encourage more people to read it. Don't forget to include your name and telephone number.

Tap into 4-H tray liners. Fast food places use hundreds of tray liners (small placemats) every day. Find out if they'll use a 4-H tray liner. If they will, borrow a sample and visit your local printer. As with posters, keep the message simple. The more pieces you have printed the cheaper each one will cost. Some burger places donate the printing if you pay for the art work. Consider including a game to keep the little ones busy.

Let the Chamber of Commerce recruit new 4-H'ers. Keep a supply of current 4-H brochures in the Chamber office. You'd be surprised how many people stop there when they first come to town. Make sure your brochure is specific to your community. If you must use a generic brochure, then include an insert that's specific to your program.

Include 4-H in business newsletters. Find out which businesses in your community have employee or customer newsletters and if they will include 4-H information. Try to include something about one of their employees. You can also include some 4-H helpful tips to justify your space. Don't forget church bulletins and store flyers, etc.
Piggyback. If you can't get a crowd to attend your public speaking contest, talent show or fashion revue, try taking it to them. Do your activity as part of an event that already draws a crowd. Making lots of people aware of the great things 4-H does for young people is more important than getting top billing.

HELP, I NEED SOMEBODY

Don't try to do it all yourself. Find some creative folks and form a committee. You may be surprised how easy this type of volunteer is to recruit. Give them a task and let them go. Be ready for some interesting ideas that may be different from yours - maybe better!

Be specific. When you're asking for something, make sure the person you're asking knows exactly what it is you want. If you want their time, tell them what you want, how long it will take and when their commitment is finished. If you want money, ask for a set amount and be specific what it will be used for. Try to make a connection as to how the giver will benefit or why they should give.

Be careful what you ask for because you just might get it!

Provide selected news releases. Provide pertinent information to opinion leaders and decision makers. Legislators appreciate having the most current information on issues of interest to them.

Visit your elected representatives. When you do, research their interests and committee work. Be able to explain 4-H's relationship to those interests. Focus on 4-H's experiential education, life skill development, as well as family and community development.
4-H'ers speak out. Recruit some teens or even younger members and train them to be 4-H Ambassadors. When an organization wants a program on 4-H, take the members along to do the talking. After all, 4-H'ers are examples of what 4-H can do, you can only talk about it. Make sure organizations know you have programs available. Practice with the 4-H'ers to obtain a smooth, polished look. Better yet, video tape the presentation and let the 4-H'ers see and hear where they need to improve. Keep the programs short - no more than fifteen to twenty minutes. Give some thought to what each person should wear, what props will be used and all the other details that make or break a good presentation.

Grab them with performing groups. One of the best ways to promote 4-H is with singing and dancing groups. Civic, church and school groups are always looking for good, free programs. There's no better way to make lots of folks aware of 4-H than to have some attractive kids sing or dance for their supper.

Don't forget college students. If you have a college in your county, you may have an untapped source of help. Ask if you can identify former 4-H'ers from admission applications or if you can put up a poster in the student center. You won't find many club leaders this way, but you may find some counselors, judges and workshop instructors. Consider forming a Collegiate 4-H Club to assist you and the college as a service organization.

College or high school work study or intern students can augment your efforts. Many classes at those levels require time spent in a local business. A student assigned to your office in January might do a great job developing a promotion to use for camp or county fair, the times when you're swamped.

Visit the local business, art, and shop teachers. They may be a potential project leader. If you visit about their curriculum, 4-H signs, art work and promotions may be built into class and individual student projects. Often for the cost of materials you can get some "A" work done.
Put 4-H in the parade. There’s no better way to tell a lot of people 4-H is alive and well than being represented in a parade. If you’ve got the resources and if there are enough parades in your area to make it practical consider having a permanent float built that could be pulled by a pickup truck. Create a simple design such as a large clover and then adapt the float to fit the season or event. There’s bound to be a barn, garage, or shed somewhere you could store it in. If most of the work is already done it won’t take long to dust it off, add a few streamers and recruit some cute kids to smile and wave. If a permanent float is too big a project for you, find out where you can borrow a hay wagon and where you can work on a float in bad weather. If a float is out of the question, how about a mascot like Chris Clover or your own creation!

Encourage parents to use the National 4-H Catalog. Lots of 4-H families are unaware of the 4-H Catalog or don’t know they can order things from it without leader or agent approval. Suggest birthday and Christmas gifts from the catalog. Order extra catalogs for 4-H families that request it. National 4-H Council has offered to mail it at no charge to any mailing list you provide.

Woo them with a 4-H Wall of Fame. A good way to find 4-H alumni is to dig out those old 4-H photos in the bottom of your file cabinet and create a 4-H Wall of Fame. Have visitors identify who’s in the picture and while they’re concentrating on the faces, find out who they are and if they’d be interested in doing anything with 4-H. You may not recruit many club leaders, but you could find some project leaders, judges or other help.

Send special Invitations. Many times the local mayor, newspaper editor, or state or national legislators will pop in on events in their area. Be sure to clarify if the invitation is to be a spectator, award presenter or speaker. Let them know about the makeup of the program and it’s participants. Don’t assume that they’ll know that achievement night recognizes special accomplishments and involves a couple of hundred people from all over the county.
FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART

Don't forget to say THANKS! Make sure the media know you appreciate what they do for 4-H. Drop them a note, invite them to recognition programs or maybe take them to lunch - it'll be the best money you ever spent. If a reporter does a nice job for you, call them the next day and tell them how great you think they are. Flattery gets you everywhere!

Hand write your thank you notes. Many people feel a brief hand written note is more sincere than a longer typed one. Try to send your notes immediately after the event and never later than a week or two. A thank you note that's several weeks old conveys the message that you don't appreciate their help. Also, try to say at least one thing that's specific to the person you're writing to so that your notes don't sound too generic or mechanical.

Use unique printed thank you notes. These can be a help when you can't write a personal letter to all involved. Pre-printed 4-H Thank You cards from National 4-H Council, Clovergrams or checks from a 4-H Thanks Account have all been used successfully. Maybe you have another idea?

Sign it in blue. Let people know they're important enough to receive an original signature on your letter or note. Use blue or some other color ink as black often looks like a copy. Always try to sign personal or thank you notes yourself. Blue is easier to tell originals from copies too.

A "You were mentioned" note is a great way to let a 4-H'er, leader or donor know they're appreciated. Many times these people and their strengths will be mentioned by others at various E.P.U., district or state-wide meetings. A short note to say "A leader from ____ county said they were impressed by your 4-H speech" makes everyone feel good.

Frame it! If you want that certificate you just presented to end up on the wall instead of in the drawer - put it in a frame. Inexpensive 8" x 10" frames cost as little as $1 each. Or ask your 4-H woodworking group to make some. Make sure the name of the person receiving the certificate is in large clear letters and is spelled correctly. Basic calligraphy can be mastered by anyone who has the time and patience to practice. You can do some great work with a computer and a laser jet printer if you have these available.
Give them something they can use. If you want to say thanks to someone for helping you, consider giving them something useful instead of a certificate that will probably go in the bottom drawer never to be seen again (unless you’ve framed it). Consider coffee mugs, memo or recipe holders, paper weights, etc. Make sure the item has a clover on it. You’ll get even more mileage if the items are made by 4-H’ers.

Ask them to judge. If you have someone you want to say thanks to for past support or if you want to encourage them to do more, ask them to serve as a judge for public speaking, visual presentations or some other event where 4-H really shines. They’ll be flattered and will usually be impressed with how well the 4-H’ers do in making their presentations.

Caution: make sure you’ll have a good number of participants to project a healthy and vital organization.

CLOSING THE SHOW

Avoid the "Yah, buts..." This collection of tips is provided as a starting point. Mix and match to suit your needs and skills. If you’ve got more, write them in. Whatever you decide, look out for the chorus you’ll get of "Yah, but." It’s the refrain sung with many tunes such as:

"Yah, but we don’t have the money."
"Yah, but we don’t have time."
"Yah, but we tried that in ’62 and it didn’t work."
"Yah, but someone might think we’re doing it for P.R."

An occasional short verse of "Yah, but" can be healthy. But you’ll move more quickly with several choruses of "Try it ’n see" with various hits such as:

"Try it ’n see who shows up."
"Try it ’n see if they’ll sponsor it."
"Try it ’n see if more people know about 4-H."
"Try it ’n see if we involve someone new."

SOURCES

Tabler, Dan. Harvesting a Bushel of 4-H Marketing Ideas University of Maryland.

Keith Martikainen
Extension 4-H Youth Specialist
January, 1989