



OSU EXTENSION

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

January 2026

NEWSLETTER

Oklahoma 4-H'ers learn gratitude through membership

As 2025 draws to a close, Oklahoma 4-H'ers and their families are gathering to reflect on the year, cherish the moments they shared and focus on one of the most important life skills – gratitude.

Gratitude is a mindset that encompasses more than saying “thank you.” Gratitude enables club members to not only be grateful for what they have, but also inspires them to give back to their communities, said [Cathleen Taylor](#), state leadership and civic engagement specialist with the state [4-H](#) office at Oklahoma State University.

“Gratitude fits right in with the philosophy of head, heart, hands and health,” she said. “When they recite the 4-H pledge, they aren’t just saying the words – they live the words through everything they do in 4-H. Gratitude is woven into the fabric that is 4-H. Showing gratitude and giving back is something we do well in Oklahoma.”

By practicing gratitude, research shows youth build resilience, lower stress levels and develop positive coping skills. Gratitude also shows others that you’re loyal and understanding. Club members express gratitude to their club and project leaders for sharing their time and helping them develop into productive and caring leaders themselves.

“Project work encourages youth to be involved in their communities,” Taylor said. “As they work alongside other 4-H'ers, caring adult mentors and

members of the community, they get a sense of belonging and appreciation for everyone’s involvement. They also get a sense of pride in seeing how their efforts benefit the community.”

Gratitude also shows up in small ways, such as writing a thank-you note to a scholarship donor or a contest judge, older 4-H'ers mentoring younger ones or stepping up to help at the last minute. There are many ways in which gratitude is expressed in 4-H.

The Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development program relies on caring adults to mentor and share their knowledge with club members. Taylor said club members are grateful to these leaders, along with county Extension educators, for the things they learn and the knowledge they gain.

“In turn, club members carry this forward by sharing what they’ve learned through their project work and community involvement,” she said. “It’s a win-win for everyone.”

Gratitude is something people tend to think about more during the holiday season. But, Oklahoma 4-H'ers know the importance of showing gratitude every day of the year.

“The 4-H program will continue to nurture thankful and thoughtful young people as they share their time and talents within their communities and beyond,” Taylor said. “As we are on the brink of a new year, look back at all there is to be grateful for and look forward to the things we will be grateful for in 2026.”

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Dewey County 4-H

Family Day

March 8, 2026 ~ 2:00-5:00 ~ County Fairground in Taloga
Contact the extension office to register by March 2nd

Agenda

1:30 - 2:00	Registration - check in food show items, set up table setting displays
2:00	Call to order and announcements
2:15	Food showdown begins
3:00	Workshop - break out session I
	* Sphero Bots
	* Manners Matter
	* Cupcake Wars
3:45	Refreshments
4:00	Workshop - break out session II
	* Sphero Bots
	* Manners Matter
	* Cupcake Wars
4:45	Contest winner announced evaluations

Culinary Contest Registration

Submit registration information to County Extension office by March 2, 2026

Name: _____ Grade: _____

4-H Club: _____ Phone: _____

Check all contests you are planning to enter:

_____ Food Show

_____ Table Setting Contest

_____ Cupcake Wars

Food Showdown Registration - Due in the extension office by March 2, 2026

Team Contact: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Cloverbuds (grades K-3, under 8 years old) _____ Junior (grades 3-5)

_____ Intermediate (grades 6-7) _____ Senior (grades 8-12)

Grades as of September 1, 2025

Team Member's Name	Food allergies	Grade	M/F

"Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communications, program information or reasonable accommodations, need to contact Jean Bailey 580-328-5351 or jean.bailey@okstate.edu at least two weeks prior to the event."

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Dewey County 4-H Food Show Sunday, March 8, 2026

Guidelines

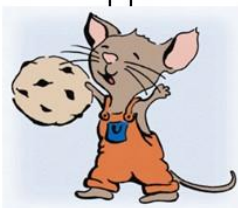
- Entries will be checked in from 1:30-2:00
- Label entries on the bottom with name and class number.
- Individuals may enter one entry in each class.
- Each class will be awarded a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, place
- An overall champion and reserve champion will be selected for each age division.
- All items should be prepared by the 4-H member.

Kiddie Korner (under age 5)

- Class KK1- Sandwich cookies (use store bought cookies, such as vanilla wafers)
- Class KK 2 - snack mix
- Class KK 3 - Veggie and dip (adult May cut the veggies)
- Class KK 4 - 8 1/2" X 11" Food Collage

Clover bud Division (ages 5-8)

- Class CB1- (3) Decorated cookies
(purchased cookies may be used)
- Class CB2 - fruit or vegetable snack
- Class CB3 - tortilla roll up (3 slices)
- Class CB4 - 8 1/2" X 11" one food group poster



Junior (grades 3-5)

- Class 1 - Muffins (3)
- Class 2 - Drop Cookies (3)
- Class 3 - Shaped cookies (3)
- Class 4—Decorated giant cookie or display of individual cookies
- Class 5—14" X 22" kitchen or food safety poster

Intermediate (grades 6-8)

- Class 6 - Yeast Bread (1/2 loaf)
- Class 7 - cinnamon rolls - no icing (3)
- Class 8 - Decorated Cake
- Class 9— Bar Cookies (3)
- Class 10—14" X 22" protein food safety poster

Senior (grades 9-12)

- Class 11- Cake (white or butter type, no icing)
- Class 12- decorated cake
- Class 13 - Bread from another culture (include a paragraph on how the bread fits in that culture.)
- Class 14 - Fruit pie
- Class 15—14" X 2" outdoor cookery or grilling poster

Classifications of Cookies

Class of Cookie	Description	Examples
Drop	Made from a soft dough and dropped by spoonfuls onto baking sheets	Chocolate chip, oatmeal, macaroons
Rolled	Made from a stiff dough that is rolled out using a rolling pin and cut into shapes with a cookie cutter	Gingerbread men, some sugar cookies
Shaped / hand molded	A stiff dough is rolled between the hands to form a ball and/or shaped using a mold or other shape or tool (fork, cookie stamp, bottom of a glass)	Peanut butter, snicker-doodles, almond crescents, some biscotti cookies
Pressed	A stiff dough is forced through a cookie press into decorative shapes	Spritz, spritzgeback
Refrigerator or icebox	Made from stiff dough that is rolled into a log, chilled, sliced, and baked	Pinwheels, shortbread, some sugar and biscotti cookies
No bake	Mixture may or may not be cooked on a range but these cookies are not baked in an oven	Chocolate no bake cookies, rice crispy treats
Bar	Dough or batter is baked in a cake or sheet pan and cut into bar shapes after cooling.	Brownies, chocolate chip bar

Table Setting Contest Guide

Description of Contest

Through participation in this contest, youth will learn valuable life skills in the areas of meal preparation – either formal or informal – meal etiquette, menu preparation, healthy food choices, and how to coordinate attire with menu and meal themes. Youth can use their imagination and creativity to create a welcoming and fun meal environment.

Rules for this Contest

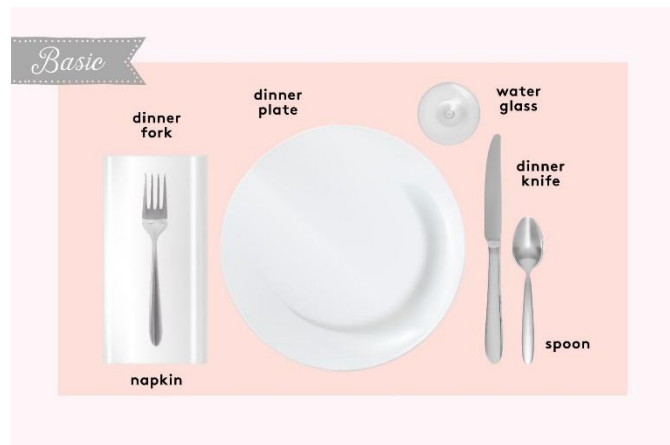
1. Contestant may bring their own folding table (such as a card table), must not exceed 45 x 45 inches. OR One half of an 8' table will be assigned.
2. Contestants must provide table service (one place setting), centerpiece, and appropriate additional decorations.
3. Entries will have a theme of the contestant's choice. An index card with title or theme should be displayed on the table.
4. Contestant should wear attire appropriate for the table setting and planned meal.
5. Contestant should plan a healthy meal, based on MyPlate food guidelines. A complete menu on 4x6in display or larger is required to be displayed on the table.
6. Recipes for menu items are optional. A meal invitation is optional.
7. Contestant will prepare and bring one dish from the meal. Judges may sample the dish.
8. Youth should prepare a brief introduction of themselves, their table and a description of their theme and menu.
9. Judges will be given five (5) minutes per table. Youth should be prepared to answer questions about their table during judge observation.

Contest Divisions

Cloverbuds - Light snack

Juniors - Plan a simple lunch menu, bring one prepared dish from the menu

Seniors – Plan a casual dinner, bring one prepared dish from the menu



Source (pictures): [https://www.realsimple.com/holidays-](https://www.realsimple.com/holidays-entertaining/entertaining/how-to-set-a-table)

[entertaining/entertaining/how-to-set-a-table](https://www.realsimple.com/holidays-entertaining/entertaining/how-to-set-a-table)

Oklahoma 4-H Horse and Dog Communication Contest

Join us to showcase your skills! We have a variety of events lined up with speech (dog or horse), illustrated presentation (dog or horse), illustrated team (horse only), horse team problem (3-4 per team) and horse quiz bowl (4-5 per team). We'll also announce the winners of the photography contest. To participate, register and submit your entry fee in ZSuite.

Event Details Date: Saturday, Feb.. 7

Location: Agricultural Hall in Stillwater

Entry fee: \$5 per person for digital photography contest, \$10 per person for communication contest and quiz bowl

Registration and photography contest entry deadline: Jan. 20

Contestants are limited to two speech contests

Contact the county extension office for additional information.

Citizenship Washington Focus

Citizenship Washington Focus will be happening June 13-23, 2026. This is an 11-day hands-on civic engagement experience for 4-H members to learn about the government and history of America through tours, workshops, and experiences between Oklahoma and Washington, DC.

- County educators will complete registration for the event via ZSuite. Registration will open on December 15th at 8:00 am and will close on February 16th at noon. This experience is limited to 25 Oklahoma 4-H members, and the remaining will be added to a waitlist in case spots open up after receiving registration from Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri.
- The cost for CWF will be \$2,500.00, for the youth selected to attend.
- Counties may register one delegate and one alternate. On the registration, the designation of the delegate and alternate will be required. Delegates will be determined based on the registration time stamp received by ZSuite.

2026 Innovate Leadership Summit

The 2026 Innovate Leadership Summit will take place Feb. 27 to March 1 at the Courtyard Marriott in Norman, Oklahoma. Tracks for this year's summit include Meteorology and Geology/Paleontology.

Applicants must be active 4-H'ers in grades 8-12 with a strong interest in STEM education. A team of up to 25 Innovators will be selected for 2026. Innovators must reapply each year.

Youth will need to have an adult partner registered to attend and work with them throughout the program. Adult partners must be a County Educator or Certified 4-H Volunteer. Adults may partner with more than one youth.

Applications are due by Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026, at 11:45 p.m. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by Feb. 6, and the \$100 registration fee will be due by Feb. 13.

Potential applicants should contact their county Extension office for application information.

National 4-H Conference

The 2026 National 4-H Conference will take place April 10-15, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia. This prestigious event brings together youth from across the country for leadership development, roundtable discussions and visits with national legislators.

Three Oklahoma 4-H'ers will be selected through an application process. If you're interested, contact your county Extension educator for details and guidance. Applications are due by midnight on Jan. 14.

Nature Navigators:

Are you ready to step outside, breathe in the crisp winter air, and make memories in nature? Join us for **Nature Navigators: Wellness in the Wild** — a seasonal 4-H adventure that combines the outdoors, healthy living, and FUN!







How to Join the Adventure

Step 1: Register Online

Sign up through 4-H Z-Suite to be part of Nature Navigators. Once registered, you'll receive your **winter lesson** straight to your inbox. Each season brings new activities, and you can complete them on your own, with your family, or alongside your 4-H club.

Step 2: Choose Your Adventure

Each lesson is packed with exciting sections:

-  Take a Hike or Outdoor Challenge
-  Educational Exploration
-  Nature Craft
-  Healthy Recipe
-  Mindful Minute
-  Nature Journaling or Reflection

You decide how to participate — make it a one-day adventure or spread the activities out throughout the **winter season**!

Step 3: Complete at Least Three Activities

To earn your **winter sticker badge**, you'll need to:

- ✓ Complete at least three activities
- ✓ Take a photo of yourself doing one activity
- ✓ Answer the reflection questions:
 - I liked...
 - I wish...
 - I wonder...

Step 4: Submit Your Adventure

Log in to Z-Suite, upload your photo, and share your reflection answers.

Step 5: Earn Your Exclusive Sticker!

Complete the steps above and you'll earn a **limited-edition Nature Navigators**

❄️ **Register today and start your winter adventure with Nature Navigators: Wellness in the Wild!**

Stay curious, stay active, and let's make this winter unforgettable.

4-H Calendar

Jan. 10: 4-H Horse Volunteers Conference

Jan. 22-26: On the Road to Leadership Trip

Jan. 24: District 4-H Has Talent

Jan 23-24: 4-H Night at the Science Museum

Feb 7: Horse and Dog Communications Contest

Feb. 7-10: County livestock show

Feb. 22-March 1 – Innovate Leadership Summit

March 7: Rising Leaders Conference

March 8: County 4-H Family Day

March 10-21: OYE

March 15: Okla. 4-H Shooting Sports Spring
Mail-in Series

March 25-29 IGNITE

March 27: District culinary contests

March 28-29: Shooting Sports Instructor Training

March 29-30 District Horse Show

March 31: District contest day

April 1-June 1: Okla. 4-H Fishing tournament

April 10-15: National 4-H Conference

April 22: Okla. 4-H Day at the Capitol

June 13-23: Citizen Washington Focus

June 21-26: National 4-H Shooting Sports
Grand Island

June 26-27: Okla. Extension Conference on
Volunteerism

July 1: District Discovery Day

July 22-24: State 4-H Round Up

Sept. 9-12: County Fair

West District 4-H Has Talent Contest January 24, 2026

The West District 4-H Has Talent Contest is right around the corner! If you haven't done so yet, make sure to mark your calendars for January 24, 2026, Fairview Arts & Education Center, Fairview, OK.

We're looking forward to an exciting day filled with creativity, skill, and outstanding 4-H talent, and we can't wait to have you and your youth join us!

Contact the county extension office for additional information, including the event guidelines and entry form.

The deadline for entry is January 15, 2026. We're looking forward to seeing the incredible talents your youth bring to the stage.

Rising Leaders Conference

Are you ready to unleash your inner leader? We're inviting 4-H'ers in grades 3-7 to join us on Saturday, March 7, for the Oklahoma 4-H Rising Leaders Conference in Stillwater. Mark your calendars for a day packed with hands-on projects, leadership skill-building and making new friends. We'll let you know when registration opens. This exciting event is designed for 4-H members in grades 3-7 who want to explore the many opportunities that 4-H has to offer. Participants will engage in hands-on experiences across a variety of projects, develop essential leadership skills and make lasting friendships with fellow 4-H members. Whether you're looking to grow as a leader or discover new passions, this conference is a perfect opportunity to connect, learn and lead in the 4-H community.

2026 Tuesday Tool Time Schedule – Karla Knoepfli

The OK 4-H Volunteer Board has planned another year of timely topics for parents, volunteers, and Extension educators. Each session has its own [registration link](#) and scheduled from 6:30 – 7:30 pm.

Feb 3 – [Lead the Way: Guiding Youth in Service Project Success](#) – Come and learn how to help youth plan, organize, and implement meaningful service projects. Participants will learn how to foster leadership, encourage ownership, and provide the right level of guidance so young people can turn their ideas into impactful community action.

May 19 - [Beyond the Basics: Creative Club Meetings that Click](#) – Learn easy ways to add creativity, youth voice, and hands-on activities to your club meetings. This session offers simple strategies that make meetings smoother, more engaging, and more memorable.

Night at the Science Museum

Ahoy Maties! Oklahoma 4-H is excited to announce the annual 4-H Night at the Science Museum – this time with a pirate twist. 4-H'ers can sleep under a giant dinosaur, by a rocket engine or in an oversize mouth. Participants will have the chance to explore the Science Museum, attend Planetarium and Science Live! Shows, and participate in a variety of special pirate-themed hands-on activities like knot tying, vortex cannons, and secret maps. Pirate-themed dress is encouraged!

This event is open to everyone, 4-H members are welcome to invite friends and family members. Chaperones are not provided – youth must attend with a chaperone who is at least 21 years old (i.e. parent/guardian and/or 4-H Certified Volunteer, etc.). All participants must have a copy of their current form (youth participation form or adult medical form).

Date: January 23-24, 2026: 6:30PM – 6:30AM

Location: Science Museum of Oklahoma, 2020 Remington Place, Oklahoma City, OK 73111

Cost: \$50 for Youth; \$25 for Adults/Chaperones
Please note – refunds will not be given to those who have registered but cannot attend.

Registration Information: Registration open December 1 – January 7

Participants will register and pay via Zsutes:

<https://4h.zsuite.org/external-event-registration/43926>

4-H Horse Volunteers Conference – Dr. Kris Hiney

4-H Horse Project volunteers, parents and teens, join us on Saturday, Jan. 10, for a day full of information sharing, learning and connecting with others who share your passion for 4-H and horses! Sessions will include:

- Sportsmanship — for fellow exhibitors, show management, parents and horses.
- Activities in the horse project beyond the show ring.
- Disaster preparedness — to get you ready for spring!
- Show ring etiquette — don't be that person!

Registration is only \$20 for a full day of learning!

4-H Shooting Sports Instructor Training

The 4-H Shooting Sports program is one of the largest 4-H programs in the nation. Community-based and family-oriented, it offers a diverse curriculum that not only helps young people develop good citizenship, personal responsibility and leadership skills but also teaches shooting safety and gun owner responsibility. Leaders will be trained to help youth learn self-discipline, sportsmanship, ethical behavior and an appreciation for the great outdoors.


- **Date:** March 28-29, 2026
- **Location:** OKC Gun Club in Arcadia, OK
- **Cost:** \$100 – Registration fee covers instructor manual, class materials, meals, snacks and insurance.
- **Courses:** Shotgun, Archery, Rifle/Pistol, Muzzleloader, Hunting Skills and Western Heritage


The registration fee must be paid online or at your County OSU Extension office by March 16.

2026 Mini Parent/Volunteer Conference

You are invited to attend the 2026 Mini Parent/Volunteer Conference hosted by Payne County OSU Extension on January 22, 2026. All counties are welcome to join us for this evening of learning, connection, and support as we prepare for a successful 4-H year.

Attendance at this event will also count toward the required volunteer trainings for the 2025–2026 4-H year.

 **Date:** January 22, 2026

 **Time:** 5:00–7:00 p.m.

 **RSVP Deadline:** January 15th

 **Registration Link:**

<https://forms.office.com/r/Y4T3sMAgZx>

New Opportunity for 4-H Volunteers

The annual 4-H Parent-Volunteer Conference, traditionally held the fourth weekend of June, will not occur in 2026. Instead, 4-H and other Extension volunteer programs have joined forces for a mega event — the first biennial Oklahoma Conference on Volunteerism!

Conference Dates: June 26-27, 2026

Programming will include 4-H, Master Gardeners, OHCE, Master FCS volunteers and more.

We're seeking 4-H volunteers, community partners and Extension staff to present workshops, posters or funshops. Don't miss your chance to share program successes, ideas and creative approaches with volunteers across the state! Apply online by **Jan. 16**.

Nominate a 4-H Volunteer for the 2026 Salute to Excellence

Do you know a 4-H volunteer who goes above and beyond for youth and our program? Now's your chance to recognize their dedication!

The Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Board is now accepting nominations for the 2026 Salute to Excellence Volunteer Recognition Program, which honors certified volunteers who make a meaningful impact at the club, county, district or state level.

Who can be nominated?

Certified 4-H volunteers in Active status serving as general volunteers, project leaders or club leaders.

How to get involved:

Check with your county Extension office to learn about your county's nomination process and how you can help. Nominations are due Jan. 16.

Let's celebrate the heart of 4-H — our volunteers!

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