



Welcome to the 2024-2025 4-H year!

I am excited that your family will be participating in Alachua County 4-H this year, and I'd like to share some information to help get your year started.

### **What to Expect**

Typically, most 4-H clubs meet once a month on a regular weekday evening for around an hour and a half. Some clubs may have additional meetings or club opportunities, so please be sure to communicate with your club leaders and connect via club communication methods! Parents are expected to stay during club meetings or send their child with another responsible adult. Youth are expected to be active participants in club meetings and activities. Club leaders are expected to help the youth club officers facilitate a fun, engaging, and purposeful club meeting. Remember, 4-H clubs are youth-led, so youth voice is the most important!

**Youth:** As you start off the year, begin considering some leadership roles you may be interested in within your club. Each club has officer roles to fill every year, and these are great opportunities to practice leadership and gain new skills! Connect with current officers and your club leaders to find out more about these roles and what you can do to prepare for them. Intermediates and seniors are especially encouraged to seek out leadership roles within their clubs.

**Parents:** Clubs also have a need for parental involvement to ensure their success. Each club has two or more club leaders who work together to help the club run, and these club leaders need your help! You can choose to be as involved as you would like, and there is a role for everyone, so reach out to your club leaders to see what needs there are within the club. Additionally, please be engaged during your club meetings so you can help your child stay involved. While club meetings are a place for primarily youth voice, it's important for parents to engage with youth at home about their 4-H clubs and projects for the most fulfilling 4-H experience.

Now is the perfect time to begin planning out 4-H projects and involvement for the year. To help guide members in planning out their year, we have developed a 4-H Project Record that highlights the major components of a 4-H project. You can find this document on our website under "Community Clubs and Current Member Resources," and it will also be emailed out to all families. I recommend using one copy now to plan your year, and then submit a final copy next summer to show your accomplishments! This document is only a couple pages long, so it's very easy to use.

## **Key Events & Dates**

Many of our 4-H'ers enjoy participating in the Alachua County Youth Fair & Livestock Show. Remember, December 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for youth fair registration. That means youth must be enrolled, paid, and approved in 4-H Online AND they must be registered and paid in Fairwire by December 1<sup>st</sup>. Please be aware that your 4-H enrollment and your youth fair registration are two separate things. While the fair board and the 4-H office work together, we are two separate entities, so please be aware of this as information is requested from each of us during the year.

Another one of our major events that will help 4-H'ers have a well-rounded experience is County Events. This is a public speaking contest held at the county level, and blue ribbon winners can move on to the district and state level contests. Youth are encouraged to give demonstrations or speeches about their 4-H projects each year to practice their public speaking skills and receive feedback from judges. Most 4-H alumni will credit County Events as one of the most pivotal 4-H experiences they had because of the public speaking skills learned! Parents, this is a prime opportunity for you to encourage your child to participate. Most youth don't start out as overly excited to participate in public speaking, but almost all youth who do it end up being extraordinarily thankful for the person who pushed them to start! In addition to the public speaking component, there is also a talent contest called Share-the-Fun that is held during County Events, and this is a great opportunity for youth to show off their dance, vocal, instrumental, comedic, or other performance-based skills. This year's County Events will be held on March 21, 2025, so go ahead and save the date!

I'd also like to encourage all of our 4-H families to get involved in state-level events! We are very lucky in Alachua County that many state events are held right in our backyard in Gainesville. There are contests like Forest Ecology, Insectathon, and more that are open to multiple age categories, overnight events like iLEAD and 4-H University that are open to intermediates and seniors, and there are also opportunities outside of Gainesville that we love to see Alachua County represented at. For example, 4-H Day at the Capitol on March 25, 2025 is open to any youth, volunteers, and family members who would like to go to Tallahassee to meet with legislators and tell them about your 4-H experiences. Last year's 4-H Day at the Capitol included over 1,000 4-H'ers from across the state, so this is a great opportunity to get involved beyond our county-level. Reach out to me or your club leaders whenever you see a 4-H event that sparks your interest!

Lastly, I encourage you all to like our Facebook page "UF/IFAS Alachua County 4-H" for our regular updates. I also want to let all of you know that I am available to help make your 4-H experience the best it can be. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [msale@ufl.edu](mailto:msale@ufl.edu) if you ever have any questions, and I look forward to having a fantastic 4-H year with all of you!

Sincerely,



Mary Lee Sale  
4-H Youth Development Extension Agent