

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can join and how much does it cost?

4-H is open to all children ages 8-18 (as of January 1 of the calendar year). Joining is done by simply filling out a registration form and writing a check to University of Maryland Extension for \$10. The form is then filed with the University of Maryland County Extension Office.

Saddles 'n' Spurs does not charge monthly dues and most club activities are available free of charge. However, it does cost us several hundred dollars a year for things such as t-shirts, craft items, materials to decorate a parade float, ticket prices to Horse World Expo... To cover these expenses, we host a "Fun Horse Show" for the public as a fundraiser each fall. All families in Saddles 'n' Spurs are expected to assist with this activity (ordering awards, putting out public service announcements, setting up, running registration, handling gates, assisting with concessions...). Families may elect to pay a \$30 per year fee to the club if they chose to not participate in this fund raiser.

Unlike club events, county and state 4-H events often charge participation fees. On an activity by activity basis, members of the club determine if some, all, or none of these fees will be paid out of club funds. For example, the State Horse Jamboree is a 2-3 day camp which costs about \$50. Last year, club members voted to have the club cover half of this cost for individuals who wanted to participate. However, they voted not to cover the costs of registering for the State Horse Judging Clinic.



What if I don't have a horse?

Most people assume that in order to join a horse club, you have to own a horse. This is not true. Anyone with a love of horses who wants to learn about them can join our club. In fact, only about half of our members own or lease a horse. Most activities focus on learning about horses not just riding them.

We do however, encourage members who want to learn to ride to be involved in a regular lesson program. Saddles 'n' Spurs does **NOT** provide riding lessons, horse training, or horse care. We can help you find businesses in the community who do provide these services.

At the county level, there are many activities that involve riding and handling horses. Saddles 'n' Spurs supports and assists with these activities. When at all possible, horseless members are included in these learning opportunities.

What does the Saddles 'n' Spurs do?



In a nutshell we try to have one club meeting and one club activity each month.

The meetings are generally held at the leader's home and involve two parts: club business and an educational component. Club business includes things like deciding on details for upcoming activities such as when and where to meet and making individual assignments. The educational component is tied to the county equestrian curriculum for the year. Information is presented by a club member and is often tied to a fun format such as a game, craft or other hands-on activity.

Monthly activities may be tied to a state or county event or be arranged just for our club. Activities range from horse shows, trail rides, and clinics in the summer to field trips and parties during the winter. We try to balance the year with things that will appeal to everyone whether they are young or old a horse owner or simply a horse lover.

In addition to the club activities, the club is responsible for helping plan and run county events such as the horse bowl, judging clinics, and horse shows. In order to have a strong county equestrian program, it is important for all members to be involved at both club and county levels.

What is a 4-H project?

Everyone in Saddles 'n' Spurs is signed up for a Horse Project and an Arts and Crafts Project. Our regular activities will help you fulfill requirements for these two projects. Other projects such as Cooking, Sewing, Gardening, Sheep, Goats... are also available, but would be completed as independent study or with other 4-H Clubs.

Each project has four basic requirements. To complete a project, you must:

- Complete at least 6 educational activities each calendar year. Our regular club meetings easily take care of this requirement for our two project areas.

- Compete in your project area. Ag. Expo (the county fair) is the perfect place to do this since it includes a full division of arts and crafts classes, an animal science display class, an entire horseless division and both english and western horse shows. Its also a lot of fun and you can both win ribbons and premiums.
- Prepare a demonstration related to your project area. Since members are assigned to present in club meetings on various topics, this again is easily taken care of if you are active in the club. In addition, you can present your demonstration at Ag. Expo and at a state communications contest for recognition and awards.
- Complete and turn in a record book showing your completed projects each year. There is a required format for this record book and it does take some work to put it together. However, both club and county awards and prizes are given for excellence in this area.

What else should I know about Horse Projects?

In addition to the basic requirements for any 4-H project, the Equestrian Project is also tied to the State Horsemanship Standards. These standards can be accessed at the state 4-H Horse Website www.4horse.umd.edu. There are four strands a 4-H member can follow in their development of equestrian expertise: Horsemanship Knowledge, English Riding, English Jumping, Western Riding. Reaching certain levels within this program is a requirement for riding at many county and state mounted events.

Testing days for levels 1-4 are offered between April and August as part of the WCHC schedule of events. Club educational activities are designed to help 4-H members achieve the knowledge horsemanship standards, but independent reading and study will also be needed to meet the rigorous standard designated in this program.



What role do parents play?

4-H is a family activity not just a place where you drop off your kids. Parents are a vital part of a successful 4-H experience. Parents are expected to attend club meetings and activities with their children and assist their child in fulfilling any leadership responsibilities they are asked to assume.

As an active participant with the club, we ask all parents to register as adult 4-H members and attend the volunteer training session offered each year by the county extension

office. Without the active involvement of parents, it would be impossible to run an outstanding 4-H program, so plan on becoming involved in all we do.

Parents also have the opportunity to be involved in the Washington County Horse Council. This body of 4-H leaders and parents plans the county program of events and carries it out. Without the WCHC, we would be unable to run the horse bowls or provide clinics, shows, trail rides, scholarships etc that Washington County currently offers its 4-H equestrian youth. Leaders cannot do it all alone, so parents please mark the second Friday evening of each month on your calendar and come help us put together a great program for your children.

What other awards and recognition are available through 4-H?

There are many opportunities for awards and recognition through 4-H. In addition to opportunities to compete at Ag. Expo, WCHC sponsored events, and State Horse Contests, the State 4-H Office at the University of Maryland has recently adopted the Diamond Clover Program. This program involves 8 levels that involve exploring a variety of project areas, assuming leadership positions, and providing community service. The Diamond Clover represents the highest level in this program and has been compared to the Eagle Scout award by many.

Saddles 'n' Spurs is committed to helping members work their way through the various levels of the Diamond Clover program, but it takes commitment of both 4-H member and parents to achieve this award.

Through 4-H, members are also eligible to apply for a variety of college scholarships. The WCHC provides a small county level equestrian scholarship and there are many other county and state 4-H scholarships available.