"THE 4-H GAME PLAN" by Danette A. Tessmann
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SITUATION

Why the "4-H Game Plan?"

An integral part of the 4-H program is the opportunity young people have to work with others in planning and implementing a club program as well as setting individual goals, planning programs to reach those goals and assessing personal progress. The Iowa County 4-H and Youth Agent and several 4-H leaders recognized that information on goal setting could help 4-H’ers meet their individual and club goals.

In addition, a motivational and enthusiastic presentation for members and parents was needed by the 4-H and Youth Agent as a topic for club visits.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were identified for the "4-H Game Plan" talk:

1. Encourage 4-H members to set goals and plan ways to achieve them.
2. Encourage 4-H members to be involved and active participants working together in a club.
3. To involve adult leaders and parents in helping members set goals, plan and evaluation.
4. To promote enthusiasm among 4-H members and adults in the 4-H program.
METHODS

What is the "4-H Game Plan?"

The "4-H Game Plan" is a talk used for 4-H club meetings. It is designed to motivate members and adults to set goals and work to achieve them as individuals and as a club. Football "lingo" is used to help young people and adults relate to the topic as well as hold their interest.

A toy football is thrown out into the audience at the start of the talk to arouse interest and curiosity. As the football is being tossed around, the speaker asks the audience questions, such as "Ever play football?", "What do teams do before they play a game?" One answer you will get will be "Warm up." You can then have your audience stand and do a few non-strenuous stretching exercises such as reach for the sky and touch your toes.

Following the warm-up, ask the question, "What do football teams like to do?" Answers will include "winning", thus allowing the comparison of a winning season for a football team and a successful year for 4-H members and clubs. Continue by explaining that to have this, you must have a game plan. For advice, guidance, support, challenge and encouragement, teams have coaches. Four-H clubs have general leaders, project leaders and parents who serve that role and also double as cheerleaders. The Extension Office staff serves as general managers because of their role in guidance and coordination.

Planning the game strategy involves setting goals. Just as a football team has a run-oriented or pass-oriented game plan, 4-H families and clubs should choose activities and projects to be involved in and what they want to achieve within those projects and activities. This is a good time during the presentation to talk about goals (challenging yet reachable, interesting and valuable) and describe and explain some of the projects or activities in 4-H to be involved in.

During the football season, practice is an extremely important aspect which contributes to a winning season. Likewise, it is important for 4-H members to work hard, get involved and be active participants in order to be prepared to reach the goals they’ve set.

Realizing that football teams don’t always get all the first downs they need during a game and have to punt, 4-H members and clubs also face problems and make mistakes. It is important to try harder, learn from mistakes and not give up. What’s important is to get the ball back and not let the clock run out.

Continue by explaining that as they grow and benefit as individual 4-H members, they must also all work together as a team to have a successful year. Everybody can be star players in 4-H but cooperation and teamwork are essential. (Compare a strong defensive line which works together and a strong 4-H club which works together.)
To summarize the talk, reinforce the importance of having a game plan to have a winning season and a successful year. Tickets that say "Season Pass for a Successful 4-H Year" can be handed out to the audience at the end of the talk.

Posters can be used during the talk. Included on one poster would be:

THE 4-H GAME PLAN
1. Warm-Ups
2. Coach
3. Set Goals
4. Practice
5. Punt
6. Teamwork
7. Winning Season

The items on this poster would be covered at the start of the talk and then revealed as talked about during the presentation.

Another poster would show a football going through the uprights of a goalpost with the caption, "Be a Goal Getter."

CONCLUSION

This innovative approach generated interest and enthusiasm, motivating some participants to take action.

From my observations, many 4–H members and parents became enthused and excited about goal setting. Many favorable comments were received regarding the presentation such as, "The kids really listened," "It really fired me up," and "It was good to take something so important and compare it to something we all can relate to." Four–H leaders indicated that 4–H members began to view goal setting for themselves, as well as for their club, more seriously. Many leaders noticed a greater willingness from members to work together as a club and more members participating in activities. A general leader reported that one family became real enthused as a result of the presentation -- "They went home and started planning goals."
IMPLICATIONS

The "4-H Game Plan" can be utilized in a county 4-H program in the following ways:

-- as an enthusiastic presentation for the 4-H and Youth Agent to use at club meetings;

-- as a topic for leader training meetings or older youth meetings;

-- as a method to encourage member and leader involvement in the club and county 4-H program.

As a follow-up to this presentation, specific programs in a club or county may be developed. Follow-up topics could include club officer training, general or project leader training, the importance of record books or 4-H activities.