

delegation: key to more time

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In our county, the demand and interest continually increases for 4-H programs. With no increase in paid staff, it used to be a problem meeting the demands from our community and maintaining the momentum of the program. We as professional youth workers were faced with a large number of important things to do, but with limited time to do them. One way we've been able to do more in the same amount of time has been to delegate responsibilities.

Most Effective Tool

And, delegation has been a most effective tool for us in managing the increased community demands for 4-H. We involve not only paid paraprofessionals, but also unpaid volunteers as 4-H leaders and resource people. We consider all of them members of our 4-H staff.

Responsibility/ Authority Concept

The philosophy that has made delegation successful for us involves the concepts of responsibility and authority. Each staff member, paid or unpaid, has a definite role in the operation of the total 4-H program. Everyone on the team has a specific responsibility to carry out and the authority to make things happen. Thus, everyone on the team shares in the success and failure of the program. The ultimate leadership and control of the total program still is vested in the professional youth worker.

The volunteer or the unpaid staff is a vital resource to this approach. Organized properly, these unpaid staff members provide the energy that makes the 4-H program move forward.

In our county, volunteer 4-H leaders and resource people are organized into 25 project and events committees. They have the responsibility of planning, implementing, and evaluating the various activities. A paid staff member is on each committee as an advisor/facilitator.

Event and activity schedules covering a year in advance and including planning deadlines and program dates are used to help coordinate each committee's functions. The involvement of volunteers at this level has meant a broader base of commitment and support for the program.

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By delegating responsibility and authority to paid and unpaid staff, our efforts as professional youth workers are multiplied several times. It's possible to get a variety of tasks done because of the involvement of other people.

Time is the one resource we all have an equal amount of and control over. It's our task as managers to decide how the time will be spent.