



Introducing York County's 4-H Clubs

Maine's First 4-H Llama Club *Llama Brigade*

Maine's first 4-H llama club is deeply involved with llamas but also is involved in community and service projects, and fun activities.

In a brief four-month period they will be participating in:

- Acton Fair clean-up weekend
- Kids Fest at Dover Ice Arena
- Planting a pumpkin patch
- Working on costumes for Acton Fair
- Sewing grooming aprons
- SAFE HOMES, a community coalition working to create a culture that supports healthy alternatives to substance use
- A Maine Llama Association hike
- A public library fundraiser

Today the club boasts 12 members, and an extremely active corps of parents.

"We have an incredible group of parents. We couldn't do this without the great involvement of the parents," says Heidi West, club leader.

At a recent meeting, members discussed what they like about 4-H:

Mary: "Making new friends."

Kendra: "I've learned you have to get along with people. There are lots of



different ages and personalities here, and we get along well."

Jeni: "I've learned patience and self-control."

Simon: "I've learned to knit and sew."

Mary's mother: "4-H has given Mary lots of opportunities to participate in the fairs. Fairs are more fun and educational if the kids participate in them."

Several of the youth commented that they liked the experiential part of 4-H. One said: "We don't just talk about things, we do them. I've learned a lot here."

As to what challenges them the most, there was general agreement that record keeping and using the 4-H Life Skills

wheel was challenging. However, they said they could understand the value of these tools.

Kara: "Keeping records makes you think about what you've been doing."

Simon: "They help you to reflect."

Heidi West says that the time she spends with the 4-H members makes her realize what terrific youth there are in York County.

"I've really enjoyed working with an older group, and this is a great group of kids," says, West.

The club meets at least once a month on Saturday, and also offers a variety of activities each month. Scheduled meetings often begin with a business meeting and then move on to activities, demonstrations or special events. At a

spring club meeting, members learned about the health and safety of llamas. They had been learning how to give llamas shots and vaccinations by injecting bananas with water.

The following month the practice paid off and members gave real vaccinations to about a dozen llamas at club leader Heidi West's farm in Berwick. There were two nurses on hand (parents), as well as other parents to help out. The kids did wonderfully!

This is an engaged, active and fun club with great youth, committed parents, and wonderfully skilled leaders.

