

Frequently Asked Questions The Future of 4-H in Contra Costa

By Shelley Murdock – County Director/Youth Development Advisor/Department Head

Q: What is the current status of the County's contribution to Cooperative Extension's budget?

A: July 1st was the start of the new fiscal year for which we have less than half the dollars we need to operate. We have taken every cost-cutting measure we can take and remain functional. That is, we laid off one full-time County employee; returned vehicles to the fleet; and closed the office on Fridays and during lunch. Our remaining County employees, Linda and Nikki, will be required to take furlough days (i.e. leave without pay) as well as a pay cut. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) is still hoping constituents can raise additional funds to keep us afloat until more secure funding can be found.

Q: What is the current status of the University of California's contribution to the budget?

A: Unlike the County, UC does not give us a budget over which we have control. They provide staff and system-wide administrative support including the State 4-H office. We know for sure that (statewide) UC Cooperative Extension will experience cuts totaling at least 20%. It is very likely that academic staff, including me, will be required to take furlough days and/or a pay cut equally 4-8%. It is also likely that statewide we will lose 4-H Program Reps. However, the UC Regents have not yet decided how to close the budget gap so everything is "on the table" and nothing is certain.

Q: If the County eliminates Cooperative Extension can the youth join 4-H in Alameda or Solano Counties?

A: No. It is each county's responsibility to provide services to their own residents. All counties are experiencing a fiscal crisis. Neighboring counties are scrambling to serve their own residents -- they do not have the resources to serve another county's residents especially considering we do not pay taxes in their county.

Q: I heard that there is a cluster system in place and that counties CAN be combined.

A: The cluster system that is being piloted does not cluster members. Rather, it is an effort to see if there is a more efficient way to train and manage 4-H program staff as well as share some functions (e.g. a group newsletter). Counties participating in the pilot still administer their own programs, enroll their own members, run their own events, etc.

Q: If the County eliminates Cooperative Extension, can volunteers run 4-H independently from the University of California?

A: No. 4-H is a Cooperative Extension program per an act of Congress. Although volunteers could develop and run a youth program with similar activities, it could not be called 4-H nor could the youth participate in 4-H events such as camp or State Leadership Conference.

Q: Is 4-H the only group that is fund raising for Cooperative Extension?

A: No. We formed a fund raising steering committee that includes 4-H (Sue Tonkin is your rep.), Master Gardeners, and other supporters. Many constituents have "stepped up to the plate" and are working collaboratively to help raise funds. Thus far, 4-H held a pizza fundraiser; 4-H members spoke at city council meetings, Lion's Clubs and the Mayors' Conference; Master Gardeners worked with the *Contra Costa Times* on an article on the fiscal crisis that resulted in donations; a group is building a County booth for the State Fair (any prize money that is won will be given to Cooperative Extension); an East County grower is hosting a BBQ dinner in September; and so forth. Additionally, UC Cooperative Extension's Associate Vice President, Rick Standiford, and I are continuing to work with the BOS on a long-term solution.

Q: *What Affiliates have responded to our request for assistance to date?*

A: Our County Budget Analyst, some County Departments, Senator Mark DeSaulnier, Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, CCTV, Farm to Fork Program, Bay Area Land Trust Board, Brentwood Economic Development, Harvest Time, Diablo Home Economists, Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative, CC Food Bank, all CE Program Websites, Bethel Island News, LiveJournal, Facebook, all local news agencies, Round Table Pizza, city mayors, several Rotary Clubs, and Martinez Kiwanas are among the responders. Also, Ag Commissioner Vince Guise, Brentwood Vice Mayor Eric Stonebarger and Oakley Councilman Jim Frazier have been especially supportive.

Q: *Will the funds raised by 4-H be used exclusively by 4-H or shared with other Cooperative Extension programs?*

A: In order to be viable, we need funds for basic operations that support all our programs. For example, our collective work requires a copy machine, paper and maintenance; telephones and internet access; transportation to serve our clients; administrative support to prepare required reports and to maintain our web sites; and so forth. Currently, about half of all the many administrative functions we perform support 4-H (e.g. enrollment, website support, bank account review, meetings, etc).

Q: *What can I do to help?*

A: There are many ways to help. . . and **all** help is greatly appreciated:

- Continued outreach to the Board of Supervisors is imperative. For example, you might invite them to judge at Youth Fair or update them on accomplishments such as presentations at SLC.Letters, faxes and calls are also helpful.
- Names of anyone with a connection to potential corporate sponsors or foundation board members are very useful. That is, If Aunt Lucy is a vice president at Chevron or a good friend is on the board of the East Bay Community Foundation, we would love your help in connecting with them.
- Labor to build and assemble the State Fair booth will be needed in late July (details will be posted on our website when plans are solidified)
- Fund raising ideas that can be implemented quickly.
- Cash donations in any amount are desperately needed (see details below)

Q: *Where can I find the most accurate, up-to-date information about Cooperative Extension's budget situation?*

A: We will make every effort to post the most current information on the 4-H website:

<http://groups.ucanr.org/cc4h/> The URL also appears at the bottom of all our e-mails and on the *Cloverleaf*.

If approached by a reporter, please refer them to the website or to our office. This will ensure that all information they print is accurate and consistent.

Q: *Why can't we make our checks payable to 4-H Friends of Cooperative Extension?*

A: 4-H Friends of Cooperative Extension was a temporary "quick" account. The name of our new, long-term, tax deductible account is: Contra Costa County Cooperative Extension.

To make a tax-deductible donation, please make your check out to:

Contra Costa County Cooperative Extension

Mail to:

Cooperative Extension
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