A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS’ EXPERIENCE WITH MARKETING AND RECRUITING 4-H CLOVERBUDS AND THEIR PARENTS

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Science in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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ABSTRACT

For many years Extension Professionals have struggled to retain youth in the 4-H youth development program. Research shows that when members start the program at an early age, they are more likely to stay in the program longer. However, little research has been done regarding recruitment and marketing to the youngest age group, the 4-H Cloverbuds. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the recruitment and marketing strategies used with the 4-H Cloverbud program. Particularly, the study sought to investigate successful recruitment strategies, and barriers to marketing the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program according to Ohio State University Extension Professionals. Specific objectives of the study were to a) explore what strategies Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/guardians, b) identify what marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/guardians, c) determine what marketing messages are used most often.

The study was grounded on two collective theoretical frameworks. The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior guided this study. In regards to marketing the 4-H Cloverbud program, the Theory of Planned Behavior and Theory of Reasoned Action help determine why or why not potential Cloverbud families intend to perform the behavior of enrolling their children into the 4-H Cloverbud program.
To address the research questions, a qualitative study was designed to investigate techniques used for recruitment and marketing of the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program. Nineteen Extension Professionals participated in one of three focus groups held via WebEx to gather data to answer the research questions. Focus group participants consisted of Ohio State University Extension Professionals from nineteen different counties who had been employed with OSU Extension anywhere from one to 30 years and been involved with the 4-H Cloverbud program from one to 13 plus years.

Significant findings from the study regarding marketing and recruitment for the 4-H Cloverbud program were associated with: a) recruitment through school systems, b) conveying the content of the 4-H Cloverbud program in messages, and c) utilizing good volunteers. Some Extension Professionals expressed that schools were their most successful recruitment tool, while other participants noted that there were many barriers to using the school systems for recruitment. In the same way, some of the participants noted that good volunteers can be a key to recruitment of new members, while others mentioned limitations regarding 4-H Cloverbud volunteers. The content of the 4-H Cloverbud program was referenced as both a successful marketing message and successful strategy.

Other positive recruitment strategies included: a) events, b) advertisements and give-aways, and c) word of mouth and social connection. Extension Professionals discussed the recruitment and marketing strategies that have been successful in the past. Concerning successful marketing messages, participants discussed that they emphasize:
a) 4-H experience, b) activity based and non-competitive, and c) fun activities for the children. The main themes for barriers for recruitment emerged as limitations and successes: schools, and volunteers.
Dedicated to my parents

For encouraging me to understand the importance of education

And to my husband

For supporting me through this process
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Role of 4-H Programs

“Eleven-year-old Emily Wunderlich took her heifer, a Polled Hereford named Reba, to the Sussex County fair. They came home 4-H champions. To many people, that image -- a little girl leading a big animal and clutching a prize ribbon -- is what 4-H is all about… Talk to 4-H leaders for five minutes -- it may not take that long -- and you're sure to hear, We're more than cows and cooking. They just wish more people knew it.”

This excerpt from a news article in The New York Times describes one dilemma of the 4-H Youth Development Program. The educational, life skill, and leadership development program, 4-H, often has the misconception brought about by its origins (Keller, 1996).

The Ohio 4-H mission states, “4-H Youth Development education creates positive environments for diverse youth and adults to reach their fullest potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing citizens” (Ohio State Extension, 2006). Youth Development is the main goal of 4-H programs, regardless of which aspect of the program students are involved.
Early Extension & The Progression of 4-H Youth Development

According to literature, the earliest 4-H-type program dates back to 1902, when A.B. Graham began the first boys and girls club in the Clark County Courthouse basement. The group founded in Ohio was called the “Boy’s and Girl’s Agricultural Club.” Officers were elected and prizes were awarded for accomplishments. The original objective of the group was to study basic agriculture, gardening, and food preservation. Graham’s “out-of-school educational program” was successful and prompted The Ohio State University to aid in the development of similar after school programs. Other states around the nation also started comparable clubs, around the same period. Many states formed corn clubs for boys with corn-growing contests and canning clubs for girls. By the year 1905, there were over 2,000 students participating in 16 counties all throughout Ohio (Ohio State Extension, 2004).

After the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, Ohio hired the first four 4-H Club Agents in 1916. The enactment established that all Cooperative Extension work, including the boys’ and girls’ clubs, be a component of the United States Department of Agriculture, directed through land-grant colleges and universities. The Cooperative Extension System had county “Demonstration Agents” who started to organize 4-H clubs along with local leaders and parents. Meetings and projects became the main requirements for the clubs (Ohio 4-H Centennial, 2002).

Clubs exhibited projects including poultry, pigs, canning, and demonstrations at the Ohio State Fair during 1918. The “Boy’s and Girl’s Clubs” were re-named with the
official title “4-H Clubs” in 1924, and the four-leaf clover symbol was patented, becoming the recognized 4-H emblem (Ohio 4-H Centennial, 2002).

Although originally started for rural boys and girls, in the 1950’s 4-H began moving into urban areas. Projects and programs have been added to 4-H in order to appeal to suburban and urban youth. Children can now participate in 4-H regardless of where they live. Even though the projects have altered, the general goal of 4-H, to develop youth as individuals, has stayed true over the years. Today youth can be involved with 4-H in more ways than just the traditional club meetings. Some other methods of participation include 4-H special interest or short-term groups, 4-H school enrichment programs, 4-H instructional TV, and 4-H camping (NC State University, 2000).

4-H Cloverbuds

The most recent addition to the 4-H program, sometime between 1993 and 1994 in Ohio (personal communication with Scott Scheer, November 19, 2009), was the establishment of the “4-H Cloverbud” program. The 4-H programming for children ages five to eight is also known as “Cloverkids,” “Cloverbuds,” or “4-H Prep” in states around the nation. “The goal of 5-to-8-year-old programming is to promote healthy development in children by enhancing life skills (social- interaction, self-esteem, physical mastery, making choices, and learning to learn)” (Scheer, 1997). In 2008, the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program served over 40,000 children, ages five to eight (Scheer, 2008).

In Ohio, the 4-H Cloverbud program was developed to address the need for programming among younger children. According to the National 5-8 Curriculum Task
Force (1992), 1,332,277 children in the United States, under the age of nine, were attending 4-H functions and participating without outlined objectives and curriculum. National data also indicated that children under nine years of age have been involved in 4-H programs for at least the last 25 years (in 1992). The taskforce resolved that curriculum was a necessity as opposed to an option (National 5-8 Curriculum Taskforce, 1992). Thus, Ohio State University Extension professionals conducted needs assessments, and created appropriate age-level curriculum, volunteer training materials, and resources for use by Extension professionals and volunteers (Scheer, 2008).

To ensure the 4-H Cloverbud lessons are age appropriate, Ohio State Extension developed 10 programming parameters to follow when planning activities. When planning 4-H Cloverbud events, program leaders should decide whether the activities fit within the 10 parameters:

1. activity based,
2. cooperative-learning centered,
3. non-competitive,
4. fairs are open to Cloverbud participation, but for exhibit only,
5. activities are developmentally age appropriate,
6. activities are safe for children,
7. Cloverbud activities are distinctly different from 9-19- year-old activities,
8. curricula are success oriented,
9. animals and animal subject area should contribute to Cloverbud objectives and parameters,
10. activity is fun, positive, and focuses on the five general life skill areas through the experiential learning cycle (Scheer, 1997).

Beyond the parameters, the developers set five life skill areas in which they consider to be achievement goals for the 4-H Cloverbud program, which include: experience, share, process, generalize, and apply (Scheer, 1997).
Cloverbud programs are activity based, cooperative learning centered, safe, age-appropriate, and non-competitive. The goal of the program is to promote physical, mental, social, and emotional healthy development. Cloverbuds deal with various educational areas including healthy living, environment, citizenship, plants and animals, consumer skills, science and technology, personality development, and expressive arts (The Ohio State University Extension, 1996). Such activities promote development of self-esteem, social interaction, decision-making, learning, and physical mastery skills. The Cloverbud program allows children to have early life experiences that affect future development (Scheer, 1997).

Other Cloverbud programs throughout the country began around the same time period with the same vision in mind. For example, in Texas, the 4-H Clover Kids program started statewide in 1988. By 2004, there were over 100,000 children participating in the Texas Clover Kids program (Howard, n.d.). The “Cloverbud” name was embraced in the late 1980s in Minnesota. The name “Stands as a sign of adventure and excitement as these children seek new knowledge, learn new skills, and develop new interests” (Center for Youth Development University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999, p 1). Ohio used the Cloverbud name because it was meant to be cute and attractive to children (personal communication with Scott Scheer, November 19, 2009). Additional states around the country have also adopted the 4-H Cloverbud or Clover Kids programs, beginning in different years depending on state programs.
Importance of the Study – Starting Young

Currently, retention and enrollment numbers for 4-H programs are down from where they were in past years. Retention is important to the success of 4-H, the goal is to keep current members involved for multiple years. In Ohio, total 4-H member enrollment numbers dropped 13,862 between 2005 and 2006, and member enrollment decreased by another 9,094 members between 2006 and 2007 (Ohio 4-H Youth Development State Statistical Reports, 2007). Considering all possible 4-H activities, Ohio enrollment for 2007 was 222,108 without the duplicate participants, who are those members counted more than once for being involved in 4-H in multiple ways. (Ohio 4-H Youth Development State Statistical Reports, 2007). 4-H Youth Development in Ohio currently serves only a small portion of the students eligible to participate in the program.

Research shows when students join 4-H at a younger age, they are more likely to stay in the program. An article from the Journal of Extension describes the importance of recruiting young children into the 4-H program. The piece states that when students enrolled in 4-H at an early age, it improved the probability that members would continue to stay in 4-H as older youth. The article went on to suggest that in order to build a greater number of long-term 4-H members, recruiters should really emphasize the benefits of Cloverbuds to parents of young students. Students who joined at an earlier age were more likely to re-enroll in the program year after year (Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005).

A study of youth in northwest Ohio illustrates that those youth already associated with the 4-H Youth Development program have a more positive view of the 4-H program
than those not involved. The 4-H members in the study agreed more strongly that 4-H is “fun” and “cool.” Those who were already 4-H members were less likely to say that 4-H is “boring” (Homan, Dick, and Hendrick, 2007). The authors also noted that past studies have shown that the level of participation in the 4-H program was inversely related to the member’s age at initial enrollment, and members with high participation were less likely to drop out of the program. Therefore, members who join 4-H at a younger age will be more involved and more likely to stay in the program (Homan, Dick, & Hendrick, 2007).

**Ohio 4-H Cloverbud Program**

The attainment of life skills is an important piece of the 4-H program. The 4-H Cloverbud program, for children ages five through eight, is very influential in life skill development. In a study by Ferrari, Houge, and Scheer (2004), parents' perceptions of their child's life skills development, program benefits, and activities were explored through focus group interviews. Parents were not told what life skills were, or what the researchers were looking for, but the adults interviewed came up with three of the five life skills that the Ohio 4-H program strives to reach (Ferrari, Houge, and Scheer, 2004).

The interviewed adults mentioned that their children involved in Cloverbuds were learning to learn, gaining social skills, and self-confidence. Parents noted the importance of opportunities to interact with others. Other life skills that parents identified, which are not necessarily targets of the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program, were categorized into self-care and self-direction. The mention of self-care applied to areas of safety, while self-direction was more responsibility benefits. According to the participating parents, 4-H
Cloverbuds are able to have fun while learning and the children have the opportunity to “speak in public and be comfortable with it” (Ferrari, Houge, & Scheer, 2004, p 1). According to the study, 4-H Cloverbuds is a suitable program because parents believe the program is positive, fits the needs of children, and helps the young members feel special by having their own group (Ferrari, Houge, & Scheer, 2004).

Other benefits of the 4-H Cloverbud program were evaluated in a 1999 study about stakeholder satisfaction. A survey was conducted amongst 277 parents, 144 volunteers, and 44 Extension Agents or program assistants to examine the perceived importance of the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program. The stakeholder input was specifically sought out because without “buy-in” from this group of important people, the program cannot succeed. A large majority of respondents in each category (parents, volunteers, and agents/program assistants) responded positively to improvement in each area of life skills (self-esteem, making friends, making choices, learning skills, and physical skills). When examining other aspects of the program, 85% of the volunteers, and 98% of the Extension professionals agreed or strongly agreed that non-competitive programs were appropriate for the age level of Cloverbuds (Scheer & Lafontaine, 2004).

Marketing and Recruiting

When discussing promotion and marketing of 4-H programs at an Ohio 4-H in-service on February 3, 2009, Patty House, Clark County Extension Educator, said “I believe marketing helps us tell our story.” Butler County Extension Educator Julie Dalzell agreed about the importance of marketing when she said, “The wrong thing to do when downsizing is to take away marketing. We need to think about that with 4-H.” The
Ohio State University Extension is currently undergoing budget cuts and downsizing of personnel; therefore, also limiting marketing the 4-H Youth Development program. On January 8, 2009, Scott Scheer, State 4-H Extension Specialist and Associate Professor in the College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences who works closely with the Ohio Cloverbud program, stated, “there is a need for Cloverbud marketing research.” County Extension Educators and state level staff both agree that research in the area of marketing and recruiting for 4-H Cloverbud programs is important.

In a previously mentioned study about benefits of starting 4-H at a young age, authors suggest that identification and implementation of the most effective recruitment strategies targeting kindergarten through second grade students and parental figures may increase awareness and enrollment of the overall 4-H program (Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005). By marketing the 4-H Cloverbud program and pushing recruitment efforts, Extension professionals are in turn marketing for the entire 4-H program as a whole. Extension professionals all seem to be in agreement that there is a need for increasing 4-H program enrollments and learning more about marketing the 4-H program. The current study attempts to research successes and failures of current marketing and recruitment efforts within the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program. By increasing recruitment endeavors for the 4-H Cloverbud program, hopefully, Cloverbud enrollment will increase, and in turn, overall 4-H enrollment will also strengthen.

**Purpose and Objectives**

This proposed study thus has the goal of providing information necessary to improve marketing and recruitment strategies for 4-H Cloverbuds. The study will rely on
in-depth online focus groups with Ohio State University Extension professionals, who work in the area of 4-H Youth Development, to identify effective marketing techniques, unsuccessful strategies, and barriers in regards to recruiting for the 4-H Cloverbud program. The following research questions will guide this study:

Q1. What strategies do Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/guardians?

Q2. What marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/guardians?

Q3. What marketing messages are used most often?

**Definitions**

*4-H Youth Development* is a national program conducted by Extension. In Ohio, the educational youth development program, directed by Ohio State University Extension, is available to youth ages 5 to 19. Involvement in 4-H is presented in a various categories including community clubs, school enrichment, resident camping, and clubs involved with school – in-school or after-school.

*Life skills* are the “abilities that individuals learn that help them to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life” (Fox, Schroeder, & Lodl, 2003, p 1).

*4-H Community Club* is one method of delivery for the 4-H program and is an organized group of youth who meet in a setting directed by adult volunteers. “The purpose of a 4-H club is to provide positive youth development opportunities to meet the needs of young
people to experience belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity—the Essential Elements—and to foster educational opportunities tied to the Land Grant University knowledge base” (National 4-H Headquarters, 2008, p. 1).

4-H Cloverbuds are children at least 5 years old (as of January 1 the current year) and in Kindergarten, up to 8-years old, who are currently involved in the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program, which includes being members of 4-H Community Clubs.

4-H Extension Professionals, for the purpose of this study, are Ohio State University Extension employees, including 4-H Extension Educators, Program Coordinators, and Program Assistants. This research study was conducted with 4-H Professionals.

Subjective Norms are a “person’s beliefs that specific individuals or groups think he should or should not perform the behavior” (Ajzen, 1985, p 12).

Perceived Behavioral Control is “the person’s belief in his control over the behavior” (Ajzen, 1985, p 34).

Limitations

The scope of this study was limited to 4-H professionals from around the state of Ohio. Therefore, the study cannot be generalized to other states or 4-H youth in general. The study design did not allow 4-H professionals to participate if they could not attend one of the scheduled focus groups. A major restructuring plan within Ohio State
University Extension, including budget cuts and reductions in force, took place during this study. The threat of the unknown, layoffs, and busier schedules among Extension professionals, who where not let go, limited the study participation. In terms of the actual data collection, focus groups were conducted via WebEx, an online communication tool. Study participants could see a PowerPoint with the focus group questions and could hear what each person was saying, but non-verbal communication was restricted due to the telephone/online format. The research method was useful in gaining depth in the subject area but not extensiveness.

**Significance of the Study**

This study provides an in-depth view of 4-H Cloverbud recruitment and marketing attempts amongst current 4-H professionals in Ohio. There has been very limited research conducted on marketing 4-H programs, especially 4-H Cloverbud programs. This could be due to the fact that it is difficult to pinpoint what exactly draws individuals to the 4-H program. In regards to 4-H Cloverbuds, research would be very difficult with 5-8-year old children. Therefore, with limited research conducted on marketing 4-H programs and 4-H Cloverbud programs, this study is necessary to gain a beginning base of recruitment and marketing strategies already tested by Ohio 4-H professionals.

The results of this study will be used by 4-H professionals to understand what
marketing messages and strategies are the most successful with 4-H Cloverbud recruitment. The 4-H professionals can then use the results to implement successful practices for recruiting 4-H Cloverbuds.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of development processes of early school age children. The chapter then continues with an explanation of Ajzen and Fishbein’s Theory of Reasoned Action (1980) and Ajzen’s updated Theory of Planned Behavior, along with a discussion of how the theories apply to marketing and recruitment for the 4-H Cloverbud program. Additionally, importance of youth organizations, benefits of the 4-H Youth Development Program, and recruitment and marketing strategies are overviewed with applicable studies included.

*Development of Early School Age Children & Youth Programming*

Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests that early childhood experiences, as opposed to adolescence, produces larger developmental effects on long-term outcomes. Therefore, children begin needing positive youth development before age nine and continuing through age 19; promoting gains in development at a younger age is a necessity. “The rationale is that human development is like building blocks in which the building (youth) is only as strong as its foundation of supporting blocks” (Scheer, 2008, p 1). Programming for children younger than eight supports positive life skill development that is necessary at a young age (Scheer, 2008).
The Pre-Operational stage, by Piaget (1971), affects children ages two through seven and is a period of rapid conceptual development. Words, images, and symbols are a large part of the child’s behavior at the pre-operational stage. Children are able to perceive and find similarities and differences, order, classify, and generalize. At age six, children begin to differentiate among emotions more clearly. Cognitive development helps children begin to identify feelings (Akman, Ipek, & Uyanik, 2000). Adult influences and learning environments for children effect developmental stages, including learning how to handle emotions and feelings.

According to Lloyd and Hertzman (2009), early child development (ECD) is the growth of physical, social-emotional, and language-cognitive capacities for young children. Social experiences early in a child’s life have long-term consequences that effect health, well-being, behavior, and skill achievement later in life. Physical, social emotional, and cognitive development early in life has been shown to be connected to middle age health and well-being. Lloyd and Hertzman’s (2009) results from a longitudinal study of students, shows that children from high vulnerability neighborhoods (those at developmental risk), over time, fall behind children from low vulnerability neighborhoods. According to the study, the social ecology of a child’s early environment is essential to help understand early child development. Characteristics of the environment that are strongly connected to a child’s well-being and development later in life include: availability, accessibility, affordability, and quality of neighborhoods’ learning, recreational, and social activities, child care, schools, medical facilities, and employment opportunities (Lloyd & Hertzman, 2009).
Research shows that children acquire cognitive, social, and emotional benefits from working together (Johnson-Pynn & Nisbet, 2002). Constructive social relationships and social problem-solving skills are critical keys to children being more socially proficient (Humphries & Keenan, 2006). A child’s emotional and social readiness are as equally important as academic preparedness for success in school, and poor social skills can lead to academic letdown (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004; Humphries & Keenan, 2006; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2009) also agrees that social and emotional aptitude can predict classroom performance and educational success. Social skills that help predict future school success include independence, self-regulation, responsibility, and cooperation (NAEYC, 2009).

According to Webster-Stratton and Reid (2004), working with children at an early age when behavior is most impressionable is a favorable method for reducing future problems. Development of social skills is not instinctive; therefore, deliberate lessons in learning appropriate behaviors are necessary (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004).

“The preschool and early school-age period would seem to be a strategic time to intervene directly with children and an optimal time to facilitate social competence... before these behaviors and reputations develop into permanent patterns” (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004, p 98).

Educators and psychologists agree that programs targeting social skills and behavior should begin as early as possible to amplify the success (Humphries & Keenan, 2006). Both beneficial and detrimental experiences early in life are collective. If positive
experiences begin early in life, they will continue to accumulate and enable children to benefit and grow; however, when children do not develop social skills early in life, they become at risk for future problems such as school dropout (NAEYC, 2009). After children have already entered a structured school system, tactics to prevent bad behavior problems should include improving social competence (Reid, Eddy, Fetrow, & Stoolmiller, 1999).

Research shows that early educational programs, in addition to the regular classroom activities, help prevent behavioral disorders and improve other learning and life skills, which enable children to be more successful academically. Studies on school-based prevention programs conducted with early childhood students reveal examples of benefits from supplemental programs for children (Humphries & Keenan, 2006).

Webster-Stratton and Reid’s (2004) classroom-based prevention program was designed for 3-8-year old children with the purpose of teaching social emotional skills including anger management and problem-solving in social circumstances. Benefits of the program included participating students having less aggressive personalities, responding more positively in social situation conflicts, and had higher school readiness scores than the control group (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004).

Another study which illustrates the long-term benefits of early childhood programs was Schweinhart and Weikart’s (1997) longitudinal study of a High/Scope program and Nursery school conducted with pre-school age children. The study participants were examined when they were 23-years old to determine the differences
between the program participants and the control groups. Participants did not have as many felony arrests compared to the control group, and participants had lesser participation in special education. The study stressed the importance of child-initiated learning activities for maximum benefits.

A study by Johnson-Pynn and Nisbet (2002) suggests the importance of offering environments that permit young children to work together and impulsively tutor each other. Through learning to solve problems together, children gain cognitive, social, and emotional skills. According to the literature, peer-tutoring is extremely important for social gains and academic development for children, even as young as pre-school age (Johnson-Pynn & Nisbet, 2002). Children develop from their relationships with adults and they grow from instigating their own learning activities. According to NAEYC (2009), both adult-guided and child-guided learning experiences are essential for child development.

In order to adhere to the research about early child development, the National 5-8 Curriculum Task Force (1992) developed guidelines for programming for kindergarten through third grade youth in 4-H. Objectives of the program included gaining life skills, social interaction and decision making, developing ongoing relationships with caring adults, and more. Consistent with the research, cooperative learning allows 4-H Cloverbud members to work in groups and succeed together (National 5-8 Curriculum Taskforce, 1992).
Importance of Youth Organizations

4-H Youth Development programs provide educational opportunities for youth and children. Leadership, service, and personal growth are all benefits of the 4-H program. The advantages of the traditional 4-H program are expanded through the 4-H Cloverbud program, which provides an opportunity for children, ages five to eight, to begin involvement with the 4-H Youth Development program at a younger age. The 4-H Cloverbud program offers a safe, non-competitive environment where children can develop socially and gain new skills. Although there are tremendous benefits of the program, 4-H Youth Development in Ohio currently serves only a small portion of the students eligible to participate.

According to Eccles and Gootman (2002), all youth require substantial assistance, support, education, and care throughout the developmental stages of adolescence. The developmental backing that youth must have can come from multiple sources. Families, schools, and communities all play a role in providing the support that youth need. These foundations for developmental aid can also be found in “community programs for youth” that exist in many different forms (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

During adolescence, youth begin to choose afterschool activities and groups of friends. For many youth, future plans are selected and classes are determined. Some youth choose to partake in volunteer work and out-of-school job-preparation activities, while others become involved in dangerous behaviors, for instance drug and alcohol use and unprotected sex. Between the ages of 10 and 15, criminal activities increase
significantly, and the amount of school failure escalates (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). If youth get trapped in peer groups that are substandard and miss out on social interactions with adults, they will have difficulty transitioning into adulthood and developing skills to function in the labor market and in the community (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Even though youth are at a large risk during their adolescent years, community programs have an ability to function as an important support during the developmental stages. As indicated by Eccles and Gootman, involvement in out-of-school youth organizations not only lower the probability of risky conduct, but also promote positive growth and development. Beneficial youth development programs can teach skills and activities that will be helpful for transitioning into future jobs and establishing social connections. Youth community programs, like 4-H Cloverbuds, allow children, adolescents, and teens to meet peers in a constructive environment where they can feel accepted (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

According to reports from a Canadian National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (Febbraro, 2001), approximately one-quarter of Ontario youth suggested that volunteer activities improved their job possibilities. Two-thirds of unemployed youth felt that volunteering would improve employment opportunities. The reports show that volunteering also aids in the development of new skills (Febbaro, 2001). Youth organizations provide opportunities for youth to partake in community service, volunteering, and other activities that will help develop job related skills.

Another form of volunteerism involves service learning, which is learning
leadership skills by practicing. Boyd (2001) specifies the importance of having youth actively involved in organizations. During a 4-H program for inner city youth, teenagers learn by doing. In order to consider activities “experiential learning,” participants need to experience or perform the activity, share experiences, process information, generalize to form guidelines, and apply lessons to another situation. Youth should be involved in planning and decision-making, positive dealings with adults, and interactions with other youth (Boyd, 2001).

A comparable youth development organization, the FFA, allows additional opportunities for teenagers to gain leadership experiences. In Horstmeier and Nall’s (2007) study analyzing the effects of the National FFA Organization on youth leadership development, results illustrated that students acknowledge gains in personal development. FFA members indicate positive youth-adult relationships. Youth organizations and leadership activities have the purpose of developing skills in interaction, group function, leadership, and self-development (Horstmeier & Nall, 2007).

The above studies illustrate benefits of youth development programs, and leadership opportunities gained by being involved. However, youth development professionals are concerned with how to better attract and retain participants for the programs. Continual commitment with a youth development program has been shown to bring about more positive outcomes (Ferrari & Tunner, 2006). Much of the struggle for program leaders involves gaining participants and maintaining attendance.


Benefits of 4-H Youth Development Program

Eight critical elements that should be included in effective youth programs were identified in the National 4-H Impact Assessment Project (2001). The fundamentals included:

1. Relationship with a caring adult
2. Safe physical and emotional environment
3. Opportunities to master skills and content
4. Opportunities to practice service for others
5. Opportunities for self-determination, decision making and goal setting
6. Opportunities to be an active, engaged learner
7. Positive connection with the future
8. Inclusive atmosphere (p. 5)

The National 4-H Impact Assessment (2001) verified the existence of the above indicators within the 4-H Youth Development program. The national study involved 2,467 youth and 471 adults. Results indicated responses about 4-H volunteers making youth feel good about themselves, safe environments provided by the 4-H program, opportunity to try new things, community service participation, and the feeling of responsibility.

There have been many studies that have determined the importance of out-of-school programs for youth. Studies illustrate that organized youth development programs, such as 4-H, provide a positive experience to develop life skills and are preventative measures for unsafe behaviors (Albright, 2008). The following section reviews studies
that have confirmed positive impacts from the 4-H youth development program.

In 2004, Gregoire performed a study conducting focus groups with 4-H youth in New York state, and interviews with the adults who work with 4-H youth. The qualitative findings from respondents illustrate the following positive aspects of 4-H clubs: a) a positive relationship with a caring adult b) a safe environment c) opportunity for mastery d) service e) an inclusive environment f) engagement in learning g) opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future and h) opportunity for self-determination. Both youth and adults involved in the 4-H program agree that there are sizeable benefits from participation.

Similar to the benefits above, Boyd, Herring, and Briers (1992) found that perception in leadership activities were higher amongst members of 4-H than non-members. The researchers conducted a study of youth ages 13-19 by sending a leadership life skill inventory to both 4-H members and non-4-H members. Results show that overall, 4-H members evaluated their skill development higher on the scales of working with groups, understanding self, communicating, and making decisions. Amongst 4-H members, perceived level of leadership increased as level of participation, in activities such as public speaking and serving as an officer, increased.

Benefits of 4-H membership was also examined by Astroth in 1996. Astroth conducted an in-depth study, examining 4-H members and leaders, using qualitative and quantitative research. Results confirmed that 4-H youth development programs help develop leadership skills amongst members. Other critical life skills and technical skills
were found to be advanced through the 4-H program.

Life skills were also found amongst 4-H members in a study conducted in 2003. Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl (2003), conducted survey research with 4-H alumni to assess the impacts of the 4-H Youth Development program on life skills. Out of 196 respondents, which were alumni who participated in 4-H anywhere from 3-13 years, results demonstrated positive life skill development. From 32 possible life skills in the study, respondents answered that 4-H participation had primary, or at least some, influence on all of the life skills ranging from responsibility to meeting new people and competition.

Cantrell, Heinsohn, and Doebler (1989) conducted a study to assess the cost-benefit ratio of various 4-H activities. The results from this study, analyzing responses from over 760 youth involved in the 4-H program, also found that 4-H programming was a major factor in life skill development. The non-formal educational experiences at 4-H contests, shows, camps, and retreats, are expensive and labor extensive, but the skill development benefits are shown to be worth the cost.

Another program showcasing the development of members in 4-H was shown in a study of an inner-city 4-H Youth Development Program called Adventure Central, students were interviewed as to why they continued participating in the program. A positive relationship with program staff was a major theme captured by the focus groups. Participation in a mentoring relationship is a benefit to youth, as well as related to better academic performance. The aspect of the 4-H youth program being a safe place was
another benefit, and the feeling of belonging made students continue involvement with the program. The data received from study participants was consistent with the strategies that are necessary for effective youth development programs (Ferrari & Turner, 2006).

As opposed to the study above, only involving Adventure Central 4-H participants, Lewis (2008) conducted a study involving students throughout Ohio. Lewis reported that 4-H members feel participation in 4-H offers a distinctive opportunity to explore interests that they could not otherwise find in school or community activities. The study surveyed students in Ohio in grades 5, 7, and 9 to see if out-of-school activities affected their lives. Non 4-H members, other organization members, and 4-H members were compared throughout the study. 4-H members reported more positively to areas such as helping others, being happy 10 years from the study time, relationships with adults, and self-identity.

Recruitment and Marketing for Programs Targeted at Early School Age Children

“Marketing has nothing to do with making money—unless that is the organization’s objective. The marketing framework and set of techniques/activities is a problem solving framework which can be used to guide an agency to achieve whatever service objectives the agency specifies. In the public sector, often these will have nothing to do with revenue” (Crompton, 2002, p 96). Most of the time, marketing is thought of as advertising a product available for purchase so that a company can make money. There are numerous studies performed on marketing and advertising research for business.
products; however, many of the same concepts can be applied to marketing, advertising, and recruiting for non-profit youth organizations.

Harachi, Catalano, and Hawkins (1997) conducted a study on recruitment and retention of families to a parent training program targeted at substance abuse prevention for children. The authors reasoned that training in skills that help with family life can narrow the risks to which children are exposed. To enhance recruitment efforts, curriculum was adapted to the needs of the families in each specific community. Sites for the workshops were products of naturally existing social networks and gathering areas. Recruitment took place at church services and coffee hours, comfortable locations close to where the target groups lived. Other techniques used for recruitment included in-direct contact through brochures and flyers, contact through a pre-existing relationship, and cold calls. Results found that the flyers and brochures helped provide validity to the program, and using key individuals for recruitment provided an effective personal connection (Harachi, Catalano & Hawkins, 1997).

Another prevention program recruitment study, conducted by Heinrichs (2006), sought to determine whether group or individual settings, and whether or not monetary payments were offered for attending workshops affect recruitment efforts. For each different condition (paid/non-paid; group/individual), recruitment included announcements at schools, parent-teacher meetings, and posters on boards at schools with condition listed. Results showed that payment increased recruitment rate, but whether the program was individual or group did not affect recruitment (Heinrichs, 2006).

As opposed to recruiting parents for workshops, Kelly, Hattersley, King, and
Flood (2008) studied persuasive food marketing to children. The research suggests effective marketing techniques that are used with children. Research shows that promotional characters enable children to remember products with a positive attitude. Persuasive marketing was highest during peak television watching times for children. According to the study, promotional characters, including cartoons and spokescharacters, and premium offers both attract children to ask for the product advertised (Kelly, Hattersley, King, & Flood, 2008). Advertising in areas where children are already attentive as well as using cartoons and/or bonus offers can be effective persuasive marketing strategies for children and their parents.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Theory of Reasoned Action & Theory of Planned Behavior**

The theoretical foundation of this research project, as it focuses on communication strategies in recruitment and marketing, is grounded on theory in behavior and attitudes. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) have very similar attributes. Together, the theories on attitude and behavior serve as a likely explanation as to whether or not parents perform the behavior of enrolling their children into the 4-H Cloverbud program.

Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action suggests that a person’s behavior is controlled by his or her intention to perform the behavior. The intention comes from the person’s attitude and subjective norm. A subjective norm is determined
as a result of a person’s perception that the important people in his or her life believe that he or she should or should not perform the behavior in question (Finlinson, 2005).

Perceptions of other people’s view of a behavior influences behavioral intentions, which may lead to the actual behavior (Guo, et.al., 2007).

Attitudes, on the other hand, are the inclination of a person to react to an object or idea with a level of “favorableness or unfavorableness” (Ajzen, 2008). Salient beliefs, which are the beliefs that are most important and relevant to a person at any given time, contribute in the development of attitudes. As shown in Figure 1, beliefs influence both attitudes and subjective norms, which in turn determine intentions and behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). If a person has complete control over the behavior in question, intention, by itself, should be enough to predict the behavior (Doll & Ajzen, 1992).

![Diagram of Theory of Reasoned Action Model](Highley, T., 2002)

Ajzen’s (1985) Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) comes into play when a person
does not have complete control over the behavior. Some behaviors are not fully dependant on the ability to choose the behavior. Certain behaviors are subjective to the individual’s perception of his or her ability to perform the behavior; therefore, Ajzen expanded the Theory of Reasoned Action. Ajzen (1985) added perceived behavioral control as another way to predict behavioral intentions, developing TpB (Guo, et. al.). TpB supports the concept that a consumer’s attitude about a behavior influences intention to perform the behavior as opposed to the person’s attitude toward the product or service (Hasen, Jensen, Solgaard, 2004).

TpB adds the behavioral control aspect to the behavioral predictors, which is a person’s subjective belief about how difficult it will be for him or her to perform the behavior in question (Hasen, Jensen, Solgaard, 2004). The TpB suggests three items that determine intention: attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm, just like the TRA, along with the level of perceived behavioral control (Doll & Ajzen, 1992). As shown in Figure 2, three combined beliefs relevant to the behavior at hand influence intentions. Behavior beliefs, considered beliefs about likely consequences, impact attitude toward the behavior; normative beliefs determine the subjective norm; and control beliefs, which are beliefs about factors that may obstruct the behavior, drive perceived behavioral control. In combination, the beliefs determine intentions and behavior (Doll & Ajzen, 1992; Ajzen, 2002b).
Ajzen describes the addition to the newer theory as, “beliefs about the presence of factors that may further or hinder performance of the behavior” (Ajzen, 2002b). Perceived behavior control considers past experiences and predicts barriers (Doll & Ajzen, 1992). An example suggested by Hasen et al., involves a consumer being prevented from buying groceries online because that consumer perceives the online process as too complex and difficult, or if the necessary resources are not available (Hasen, Jensen, Solgaard, 2004). Ajzen (2002b) suggests that perceived behavioral control encompasses both “self-efficacy,” level of challenge whether tough or trouble-free, and “controllability,” the degree to which the behavior is controlled by the person performing the behavior.

Perceived behavioral control was added in an effort to explain circumstances where people lack complete control over behaviors. Although the supplementary aspect of perceived behavioral control does help make the theory more complete, there are still
some situations where the behavior would actually have to be termed a goal. For instance, Ajzen (2002b) gives the example of getting a job. Since the job depends on actions of other individuals, the example of getting a job would be considered a goal, where as applying for the job could be considered a behavior. The perceived behavioral control aspect comes into play when obstacles, such as not having enough time to complete the application, are perceived to be in the way of completing the behavior (Ajzen, 2002b).

According to Doll and Ajzen (1992), attitudes that are formed through direct experiences are more established and have a greater certainty. By performing the behavior in question, people discover affirmative and negative consequences and witness the feedback reactions of other people. In Doll and Ajzen’s study testing the effects of type of experience and motivational orientation on prediction of video game behavior, results found that direct experience produces a stronger attitude-behavior relationship than indirect experience. Direct experience also made attitudes more stable and accessible, as well as intentions higher (Doll & Ajzen, 1992). Ajzen (2002a) suggests that it is easier to create new beliefs with new information than to change existing beliefs.

According to this research evidence, people would have stronger attitudes about the 4-H Cloverbud program if they were directly involved in some form. Parents who were directly involved in 4-H themselves, or have older children involved in 4-H might have a stronger, more positive attitude toward the 4-H Cloverbud program than parents who have not been directly involved with the program. If parents have some negative belief about early-childhood programs, it might be more beneficial to give new
information about the 4-H Cloverbud program and create new beliefs than to try to change the belief they currently hold.

**Application of Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior to Marketing the 4-H Cloverbud Program**

The Theory of Reasoned Action (1980) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (1985) have both been applied in numerous studies (Guo, et al.; Hasen et al.). The theories seem compatible for the study about recruitment and marketing strategies for the 4-H Cloverbud program for several reasons. The subjective norm, or person’s belief about what others think, could be a major factor in determining whether or not to perform the behavior of enrolling children into the 4-H Cloverbud program. A parent’s preconceived attitude or belief about joining a 4-H Cloverbud program also could play a role in the behavioral intentions to enroll in the program. Perceived behavioral control may be a reason that parents do not enroll their children in the 4-H Cloverbud program. If parents perceive that they do not have the resources, time, or ability to participate, they might not enroll their children in the 4-H Cloverbud program. Aspects of the theories of planned behavior and reasoned action should be compared to study results to see if there is a connection with current marketing strategies for the 4-H Cloverbud program.

The theory of planned behavior is often explored in relation to consumer behavior. The intention would be in regards to intention to purchase a product or service (Ajzen, 2008). In a similar manner, in regards to the 4-H Cloverbud program, intention could be the intention to enroll in the program (no purchasing necessary). The same factors of behavioral, normative, and control beliefs would influence the intention to
Highley (2002) conducted a study of the intention of teachers to perform advisory activities using the TRA. Highley found that the normative expectations of colleagues and administrators as well as the attitude of the teacher played a role in determining the teacher’s intent to implement advisory programs. Findings reflected that the administrators did not place high emphasis on advisory programs; therefore, teachers did not perceive the advisory behavior as important, influencing intentions to participate in the program (Highley, 2002). In the same manner, whether or not parents of 5-8 year old children perceive that other parents and influential people believe that the 4-H Cloverbud program is important could greatly manipulate a parent’s intention to enroll their child into the program.

Greenslade and White (2005) performed a study analyzing the predictive ability of the theory of planned behavior in regards to above-average volunteering among adults. Results found that attitude, subjective norm, and self-efficacy affected intentions to volunteer at an above-average rate. Intentions to volunteer were predicted by ability to carry out the behavior, attitude toward volunteering, and perceptions of peer pressure. Research findings also concluded that intentions to volunteer at an above average rate most likely influenced actual participation at an above average rate (Greenslade & White, 2005). Similarly, intentions to enroll children into the 4-H Cloverbud program should most likely lead to the behavior of enrolling children into the program.
Summary

Research indicates that young children are extremely influenced in regards to developmental growth. As early as age six, children are differentiating among emotions more clearly, as well as growing socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically. A child’s environment, including relationships with adult role models and programs that allow cooperative learning play a major role in child development. According to the research, future behavior problems could be avoided by working with children at an early age.

Youth development programs, such as 4-H, are viable tools for positively influencing youth. Involvement in out-of-school youth organizations can help deter risky behaviors and promote positive growth as well as provide skills and confidence for future job opportunities. The 4-H Youth Development program in particular, provides a safe environment with caring adults, helps members gain leadership skills and self confidence, along with opportunities to try new things.

Many times, the benefits of youth development programs are known, but recruiting families into the organization is challenging. The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior help explain reasons why parents would or would not perform the behavior of enrolling their children into a youth development program, more specifically the 4-H Cloverbud program.

Few studies investigate successful and unproductive strategies for marketing youth development programs. What marketing strategies are most successful? What
messages work best with parents versus youth? These questions can be explored through a qualitative study of Extension Professionals who work with the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

According to the literature, early childhood is an important time for development and growth. Youth development programs in the early years, along with positive adult influences, can help children acquire life skills needed for the future. The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior help analyze successful and unsuccessful marketing strategies for youth development programs. Few studies have been done to research recruitment and marketing for youth organizations; therefore, this study aims to contribute to the findings about marketing and recruiting for youth organizations, specifically the 4-H Cloverbud program.

This qualitative study was designed to explore recruitment and marketing strategies used for 4-H Cloverbuds. Focus groups were used to collect qualitative data to answer the research questions:

1) What strategies do Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/guardians?

2) What marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/guardians?

3) What marketing messages are used most often?

Chapter three will discuss the methodology used to conduct the study, which includes the
research design, subject selection procedures, procedures for instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis plan.

**Design of the Study**

This qualitative study utilizing three focus groups was designed to examine data in detail. Small sample sizes were used for more of a personal interaction that could evolve during the study. The goal of qualitative research is “a holistic picture and depth of understanding, rather than a numeric analysis of data” (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, Sorensen, 2006, p 31). This study sought to examine the overall picture of marketing and recruitment strategies for 4-H Cloverbud programs in Ohio.

The researcher designed a moderator guide to conduct three in-depth online focus groups with Extension professionals. The research protocol contains questions that were meant to address the research questions of this study. A qualitative study was deemed to be most appropriate for this research effort in that there has not been much research done in this area in the past. Focus groups allow researchers to explore and describe by collecting data on complex topics in rich detail. Focus groups are interviews with a group of people in which the moderator guides with discussion questions while the group converses about the subjects. Answers to the moderator’s open-ended questions and discussions from participants during the focus groups serve as the data collection for the study (Kruger, 1998).

Focus groups for the current study were conducted online using a web conferencing program called WebEx. Ohio State University Extension, on the state level and in the counties, has recently suffered budget cuts; therefore, Extension professionals
are limited on time and travel money. Conducting focus groups online allowed Extension professionals throughout the state to participate in discussions without requiring travel.

Although focus groups have many benefits, there are also limitations that come with the research method. Since group members are able to discuss and interact with each other, participants are capable of changing the path of discussion, which leads to irrelevant issues being discussed (Krueger, 1998). The moderator is responsible for keeping the discussion focused. Another potential limitation is that focus groups can be challenging to analyze. Comments should be accounted for under the context in which they were mentioned. This task of analyzing can be difficult considering the group discussion format (Krueger, 1998).

These limitations can be overcome by preparing for the focus groups. Before the data collection even begins, the researchers knew why that data was being collected, what exactly was being collected, when, how long, and how the data would be analyzed (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). A moderator guide was prepared to use with all focus groups and field notes were taken during each session. The researcher also utilized triangulation, which is using more than one source of data for findings (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). The transcripts and field notes of the three focus groups conducted, with at least three participants in each group, allowed for triangulation and for differences of opinion. Data was collected from participants until a level of saturation was achieved (Krueger, 1998).

Limitations with online focus groups include the lack of non-verbal contact. Group members and the moderator cannot physically see who is talking, witness heads
nodding, or other non-verbal cues. Participants could be less likely to participate in
discussion if they are not in the same room, and other distractions could arise in each of
the offices where participants are located.

Even though there are limitations, research shows online focus groups are
effective methods of qualitative study. Fox (2007) performed synchronous focus groups
online with youth. The study suggested that online focus groups make insecure youth
more comfortable and therefore more apt to participate. Fox writes, “If the challenge for
those who host focus groups online is to ensure that the online environment facilitates
group interaction in a way that is comparable to traditional, face-to-face focus groups,
synchronous communication might meet this challenge” (Fox, 2007, p 546). Watson,
Peacock, and Jones (2006) also performed online focus groups and agree, “Online focus
group interaction was found to generate rich qualitative data” (p 551). Hardy and
Scheufele (2005) performed a study comparing the difference between online and face-
to-face discussions regarding politics. Results illustrated the same moderating effects for
online as face-to-face interaction (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005).

Even with the limitations regarding focus groups, the research method still
seemed most beneficial for collecting data to explore marketing and recruitment
strategies used with 4-H Cloverbuds. Focus groups allow people to discuss in an open
social environment as opposed to controlled experimental situations, and the relaxed
group atmosphere encourages participants to speak openly and honestly. Focus groups
also allow the interviewer the option of exploring issues more in-depth by probing, which
is not possible with survey research. Another advantage of focus groups is that the results
are presented in a format that is easy to understand and to use by those who the research will benefit, not in the form of complex statistical charts (Kruger, 1998).

Qualitative focus groups were selected for the current research study because marketing and recruiting for 4-H Cloverbuds is a topic that needs exploration. Focus groups are valuable for researching topics where there is much to learn. Intensity of the information gathered was more important than the span of the information for this particular study. Having the ability to probe for further information was also important.

Subject Selection

The researcher used the 2009 list of Ohio State University Extension 4-H Youth Development Educators and Program Coordinators, and Program Assistants as a sampling framework for this study. Only counties with recognized Cloverbud groups were eligible for participation in this study.

In order to find the counties without Cloverbud programs, the researcher used the Ohio 4-H Blue Ribbon Youth Enrollment Program, which counts the number of Cloverbud handbooks purchased in each county in Ohio, giving an idea of which counties do and do not provide the program. After disqualifying the counties without any Cloverbuds, an organized sampling technique was used to select participants. The Ohio State Extension Cloverbud Specialist identified 10 Cloverbud committee members who were automatically invited to participate in the study to make sure there are some participants who are actively involved in 4-H Cloverbud programming. The additional study participants were strategically selected by geographic and demographic regions.
The researcher invited an equal amount of participants from each region: West, Southeast, and North Central. The researcher’s committee members helped ensure rural, suburban, and urban participants were all invited to participate in the study in order to get an accurate sample of the entire State. A total of 40 participants were invited to join the focus groups.

After counties were identified, an email was sent to the 4-H Educator in the chosen areas asking the recipient to forward the letter on to the Extension professional who is most involved with the county Cloverbud program, if not themselves. This allowed Program Assistants or Program Coordinators who manage county Cloverbud programs to be part of the research as well as Educators. The researcher emailed invitation letters (Appendix A) on March 27, 2009, notifying potential subjects about the study, encouraging participation, and asking the recipients to respond back with which focus group time they would be willing to take part. One week later, the researcher started calling subjects that had not responded and attempted to establish participation times. As an incentive, participants were entered into a drawing to win an Ohio State football signed by Coach Jim Tressel.

Focus groups, preferably, should contain between six and nine group members. A group of six to nine participants provides a small number so that people are not competing for time to talk, but there are enough differing views to encourage conversation (Krueger, 1998).

Over recruiting to ensure a sufficient number of attendees is recommended (Krueger, 1998). After 40 were invited, a total of 19 participants were recruited – six for
the first focus group, five for the second, and eight for the third session. Out of the 19 participants, one was a male and 18 were females. Some Extension professionals could not participate due to time conflicts, others did not respond to emails or phone calls, and two individuals agreed to participate, but did not attend the WebEx conference. Focus group one had six participants, focus group two had five participants, and focus group three had eight participants. Participants in the study were employed with Extension anywhere from one to 30 years, and had involvement with the 4-H Cloverbud program anywhere from one to 13 plus years.

Initial emails were personalized with the potential participant’s name, and follow up phone calls were made if there was no response to the email invitation. Approximately five days before the focus groups, emails personalized with the participants’ names (Appendix B) were sent as a reminder about the focus group with information regarding date and time, along with information about how to participate in the WebEx conference call. These strategies emphasized the importance of their participation and helped increase attendance.

**Procedures**

All three focus groups were conducted online using the web conferencing program, WebEx. Ohio State University Extension professionals are very familiar with the WebEx program because administrators have been using it frequently to conduct trainings and meetings as opposed to traveling to a common place. Extension professionals could meet with the focus group via the internet and telephone without leaving the comfort of their office or home. The first focus group was held on April 13,
2009 at 9:00 am, with the second session being held the same day at 2:00 pm. Focus group number three was a week later, April 20, at 2:00 pm.

Focus group participants joined the focus group online via WebEx and over the telephone. On the website, the researcher and participants could view the participants’ names, which were denoted when the person was speaking. A PowerPoint with 12 discussion questions was also shown online to focus group participants. Only the researcher could move the slideshow forward so that participants would focus on the question at hand instead of skipping ahead to view future questions.

Molded after Krueger’s (1998) examples whenever possible, the researcher developed study questions. The researcher then met with content and focus group experts to discuss wording, order, and content of the questions. Open ended questions were included to promote discussion amongst participants. Moderator guide questions were developed to answer the research questions. Researcher developed probes prompted subjects to elaborate more fully when needed. Along with the researcher, three other experts examined the moderator guide to ensure reliability and validity. The same guide was used with each focus group.

Before the WebEx focus groups began, participants were emailed a brief questionnaire indicating years of OSU Extension employment, level of education, county of employment, and years of experience with Cloverbuds (Appendix C) and a confidentiality form (Appendix D). Results for the question, “Were you in 4-H or Cloverbuds as a child?” were not measured correctly, so the question was thrown out. Confusion was held under this question because it was actually asking two questions in
one. Some Extension Professionals assumed the researchers were asking if participants had been involved in 4-H, while others read and answered the question of whether or not they had been in 4-H Cloverbuds. Each participant joined the focus groups online and on the telephone, and then the researcher began with introductions.

Basic introductory questions were asked at the beginning of the discussion to ease participants into the dialogue and gave everyone a chance to speak. The questions were intended to reveal similarities among subjects as well (Krueger, 1998). A transition question was included to initiate general conversation about the research topic. The researcher asked, (a.) How have you been involved with the 4-H Cloverbud program?

Key questions were asked about successful and ineffective marketing and recruitment strategies in order to collect the rich research data anticipated from this study. Questions can be found in Appendix E. All of the questions were prepared as open-ended questions so that participants could discuss based on personal experiences. The questions were not formed to be one-word answers, but to promote discussion and responses in the participants’ own words.

The researcher kept the office phone on speaker and recorded the focus group discussions with a digital audio recorder. Each of the focus groups were taped and transcribed for validity. The researcher also kept a running list of who was speaking when and pieces of the topics to help with the transcription process. Another researcher listed into the call to help with the triangulation of findings. Participants were able to type thoughts in an area of the WebEx program online; however, none of the participants used that feature. All discussions were held vocally over the phone.
**Validity**

Validity is whether or not a research method produces the results it is intended to measure. Focus groups are effectively valid as long as they are utilized for a research problem that is suitable for focus groups and if they are managed cautiously (Krueger, 1998).

Validity of the questioning route for the present study was established by a panel of faculty from the Department of Human and Community Resource Development, and a member of the Ohio State University Extension Administration. Several replications of the questioning route were formed before the final version was approved. Reliability was dealt with in the research design. The researcher included a script for the beginning of the focus groups to ensure each group was consistent. The same questioning route was used with each focus group, arranged as the moderator guide (Appendix F). All focus group online discussions were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were saved and were read by the researcher. Findings were discussed with a faculty member familiar with the study to make certain reliability in interpretation and coding. Since focus groups are not typically generalized, external validity was not a major issue.

**Data Analysis**

Request for Exemption Determination status (Appendix G) for this study was sought and obtained through Office of Responsible Research Practices (Protocol Number 2009E0177). Three focus groups were conducted via WebEx, involving a total of 19 participants who are employed as OSU Extension professionals in Ohio.
Correct function of the audio recording was checked immediately after the focus groups were finished. When all of the focus groups were complete, the recorded data was transcribed by the researcher. Transcriptions were recorded word for word to ensure accuracy of responses (Appendix H). To guarantee confidentiality, the researcher and thesis advisor were the only people who had access to the recordings.

Researchers used open coding analysis to look for common themes, similarities, and dissimilarities that were discussed during the online focus groups. The qualitative data was coded by theme and categories were created. As themes became apparent, they were compared to existing categories to look for common relationships (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen, 2006). Representative quotations from the focus group subjects were used to help illustrate and provide specificity to the various themes. Major themes, minor themes, and unique responses were noted for all three focus groups combined. For validity purposes, a professor close to the study checked the themes and categories for accuracy.

Data collection for qualitative studies uses the researcher for the analysis process. The researcher organizes, interprets, and categorizes the qualitative responses; therefore, he or she is the main research tool. As a result, the research needs to be conscious of how previous experiences may influence the data analysis.

*Reflections as a Researcher*

As the researcher, I have had past experience with the Ohio 4-H program as a member, and now as a 4-H Program Coordinator; however, I was not personally involved with the 4-H Cloverbud program as a child. My personal and professional knowledge of
the 4-H program provide insight to personal reasons why people might join 4-H and challenges concerned with recruiting and marketing the 4-H Cloverbud program as an Extension Professional.

Since I have only been employed with the Ohio State University Extension service for one year, I have not had many experiences with recruitment and marketing. It was imperative for me to remain open to the participants’ opinions and perspectives. Hopefully, this study leads to a better understanding of successful marketing strategies for the 4-H Cloverbud program, as well as insight about barriers and challenges Extension Professionals experience in regards to marketing the program. Optimistically, the knowledge gained from this study will lead to changes that can improve marketing efforts for Highland County, as well as, the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program.

Summary

This qualitative focus group study was designed to find information about the research questions: a) What strategies do Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/ guardians b) What marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/ guardians c) What marketing messages are used most often. A moderator guide was designed to collect data during three online focus groups performed via WebEx. Nineteen Extension Professionals from all different counties in the state of Ohio participated in the focus groups. Focus group questions were shown on a PowerPoint online and discussed over the phone. Each focus group was digitally recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions
were coded by theme and categories were created. Validity was established by having two researchers listen to the recordings, and review the transcriptions and the themes.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Literature shows that youth are most influenced developmentally at an early age. Relationships with caring adults, opportunities for interaction with other children, and participation in youth development organizations help establish positive growth in children. Few studies have been done to research marketing and recruitment for youth organizations to parents and children. The Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior serve as the theoretical framework for this study. In order to find more information about marketing and recruiting for the 4-H Cloverbud youth organization, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1) What strategies do Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/guardians?

2) What marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/guardians?

3) What marketing messages are used most often?

The results reported in this chapter are established from three focus groups with a total of 19 Ohio State University Extension Professionals who held employment with a county in which there were 4-H Cloverbud members as of February 2009. Participants in
the study were employed with Extension anywhere from one to 30 years, and had involvement with the 4-H Cloverbud program anywhere from one to 13 plus years. This chapter answers each of the research questions by presenting the research question first, followed by the focus group questions that were developed to answer the research question. Categories and themes are presented under the research questions.

Results from the demographic survey indicated that participants had been employed with OSU Extension anywhere from 1 to 30 years, with results spread evenly across the spectrum. The mode occurred from 6 to 10 years, with four participants reported employment in the category of 6 to 10 years. Geographically, five participants were from the West region of Ohio, five participants were from the Northeast portion of the state, and nine participants were from the South central part of the state. A large majority of the participants hold a Master’s Degree, while two reported having a Bachelor’s Degree. Extension Professionals reported working with the Cloverbud program anywhere from 1 to 13 years plus, with the mode occurring at 13 plus years. The majority of participants reported that they did not have relatives in the 4-H Cloverbud program, but three participants said they did have family members in the program. Fifteen of the professionals were titled Extension Educators, two were Extension Program Coordinators, and two were Extension Program Assistants. Participants’ ages ranged from 26 to 60 years old, with the mode occurring in the 30-35 age range. Four participants reported that they were 30-34.
Research Question #1: What strategies do Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/guardians?

Participants were asked open-ended questions during the focus groups to help describe strategies used to recruit 4-H Cloverbuds. Specific focus group questions were developed to address research question one; therefore, below are results pertaining to: a) recruitment strategies used to create interest in your county 4-H Cloverbud program; b) how recruitment strategies are different for parents versus youth; c) the most successful recruitment strategies; and d) the most important aspect to the success of a 4-H Cloverbud program.

Recruitment strategies used to create interest for county 4-H Cloverbud programs

Extension professionals were asked to describe current recruitment strategies that they use for 4-H Cloverbuds. The top themes that emerged included: a) utilizing schools for recruitment, b) recruitment through events and information, and c) advertisements and give-aways. A major theme across all focus groups was going into schools for recruitment. The school experiences differed from presenting reading programs, sending 4-H clubs to do recruitment, targeting after school programs, sending flyers or letters home through the schools, setting up at school open houses, and Extension Professional physically visiting the children at school for recruitment. Participant 5 in focus group one stated, “We do flyers as well, and place them in the schools and businesses and we do go into the school systems every February for our recruitment month. We try to hit the kindergarten, first, and second grades.”

“We started targeting Cloverbuds in our afterschool program.” – P8 FG3
“We recruit pretty much strictly through the schools. Sending out flyers to the schools, just like we do with out older youth 4-H members.” – P3 FG2

Another major theme was recruitment through events and handing out information. “During our Clover Clues at the fair, when [the children] finish the scavenger hunt, they get a goodie bag sponsored by 4-H Committee and it is filled with all of the information on how they join 4-H, what kind of clubs, where the clubs are, and all of the contact information is put in there,” said participant 8 during focus group three.

Other responses included special events to attract children, allowing them to bring a friend, community parades, “kids’ day” at the county fair, 4-H week activities, and open houses. For example, one participant in focus group two stated,

“We recruit at our “Spotlight on 4-H.” It’s an annual spring event, and we have a Cloverbud station there, and they make an activity. So, all the young people enjoy making a craft or an item while hearing about Cloverbuds. That is a good way to interest them in the program.”

“4-H week is a really big thing for us. This year we did an ice cream social for 4-H week, which brought in a lot of recruitment for Cloverbuds.” – P1 FG2

Utilizing special events to create interest and hand out information about the program was a significant recruitment tool.

Advertisements and give-aways were also recruitment strategies that were mentioned in multiple focus groups. T-shirts for 4-H Cloverbud graduation and Cloverbud camp were used to generate interest in the program. One participant mentioned that their county places bookmarks in the libraries. Participant 8 from focus
group three said, “We always pass out something that says 4-H – balloons or pencils, little flyers that advertise what we’ve got coming up.”

“Every kid that graduated [from Cloverbuds] got a Cloverbud t-shirt that said Cloverbud graduation on it, and that did generate some interest.” – P4 FG3

“When we put bookmarks in the libraries during 4-H week, we also mention Cloverbuds and those ages on the bookmarks.” – P4 FG2

Three Extension Professionals expressed that they utilize local media as a recruitment tool. One county has Cloverbuds write articles for the paper, while another writes articles about 4-H Cloverbuds. A third participant said, “During our county 4-H week, we usually have a Cloverbud leader on the radio program.”

While some Extension Professionals had much to say about 4-H Cloverbud recruitment efforts, others said they rely on word of mouth and social connections. “We have not really done a lot to recruit Cloverbuds specifically, and we are pretty much doing the people who are siblings of older members, as well as those that hear by word of mouth,” participant 6 stated during focus group three. Participant 5 from focus group three suggested that word of mouth was used in addition, or in cooperation, to other recruitment efforts, allowing 4-H members to bring a friend to activities: “Cloverbuds are allowed to bring a friend. So, we have had a lot of new kids coming because they are just coming as a friend of a 4-H member.”

Two focus group participants mentioned that they use displays at the fair or in local businesses and libraries to create interest in the 4-H Cloverbud program. One participant indicated that they send teens to 4-H Clubs throughout the county to advertise
4-H Cloverbud camp along with the other 4-H camps. “In our 4-H booth during the fair, most of the clubs that have Cloverbuds in them do a really nice job of making sure their section is really designated for Cloverbuds, so there is visibility there.” – P4 FG3

**How recruitment strategies are different for parents versus youth**

Focus group participants were asked how their recruitment strategies were different for parents versus youth. Key themes included: a) word of mouth or social connection, and b) content or program basics. A major theme that emerged was again, more prominently this time, *word of mouth or a social connection*. Participant 6 from focus group three stated, “As far as recruiting parents, most of them I think have some sort of 4-H connection. Whether the parent was a 4-Her themselves, they somewhere along the line became aware of Cloverbuds.” A sub-theme, having older siblings (older children of the parents) in the traditional 4-H program, transpired through the discussion. “Our clubs have proven to be the best recruitment tools.” – P1 FG3

“…because they had their older 4-H members, siblings, that are in the program. They see all the fun activities they get to do, and if we don’t have things that we can hook these younger members into it, I’m afraid we are going to start loosing the Cloverbuds.” – P2 FG1

A second prominent theme throughout discussions became *content or program basics*. During the focus groups, a few different Extension Professionals noted that it is important to talk to parents about the basics of the 4-H Cloverbud program, “such as ages, what the children will be learning, that they are learning life skills, to cooperate, and finish what they started.” Another participant said that she specifically puts together a
“parent packet” with information about 4-H Cloverbuds “so they understand our program better and know what resources we have to offer them.” Extension professionals agreed that parents what to know what is available, what the children will be learning, and what skills they will gain.

“I get emails wanting to know what the Cloverbud 4-H is all about and I think they are interested in the information about life skills and those kinds of things, as well as what we do at our club meetings.” – P3 FG1

Aside from the two main themes regarding differences in recruitment strategies for parents verses youth, two participants in focus group one also mentioned that they need to make sure they get the 4-H Cloverbud members into the right club “because I have some clubs that just don’t work well with Cloverbuds.” Another item mentioned by participant 2 in focus group two was generating interest in parents through flyers at local schools or libraries,

“These of the flyers that we’ve had at local schools or libraries. That’s how we get parents interested, and so they call in and we steer them to one of our local clubs.” – P2 FG2

**The most successful recruitment strategies**

The most prominent themes for this focus group question emerged as: a) word of mouth and social connection, b) displays and information, c) recruitment through schools, and d) events. As an emerging theme throughout all of the discussions regarding research questions one, word of mouth and social connection again became apparent when discussing the most successful recruitment strategies. All of the participants in focus
group three agreed, “Friends recruiting friends – a little kid going to t-ball and getting the team to join,” is a very successful recruitment tool. Participant 5 in focus group one stated, “Word of mouth and the general excitement of the current 4-H members and current advisors in the county.” Extension Professionals mentioned that the 4-H Cloverbud program is good for existing children. Participant 3 from focus group two stated, “It is an outlet for those younger siblings that are coming to 4-H meetings anyway.” Another participant agreed saying that it gives younger children “a purpose for coming to the meetings.” Participants from all three focus groups agreed that one of the most successful recruitment strategies is some sort of connection to the 4-H Cloverbud program, whether it be by word of mouth, older siblings, or friends.

Another apparent theme for successful recruitment strategies was displays and providing information. Two Extension Professionals said that they use placemats or tray liners with games and contact information in local restaurants. For example, Participant 7 from focus group one said, “We design placemats ourselves, here in our office, and they go in the local family restaurants with a number of where they can contact for more information about 4-H.” One participant suggested that “the publicity that we give, like the newspaper articles, or again the displays or the things that we have going on with the county has been very successful with our Cloverbud program and the recruitment for that.” Two other Extension Professionals stated that they list information about Cloverbuds and how to join on their websites. Participant 4 from focus group two said, “We also list Cloverbuds on our website, so people going there can click on Cloverbuds and see the requirements and some of the activities involved.”
Recruitment through schools was discussed as a successful recruitment strategy. Participants conferred that sending brochures or flyers home to parents through the school system was an effective recruitment tool. One Extension Professional said along with the fliers the county sends to the schools, she “asks the teacher if they have been a Cloverbud parent to describe what takes place in Cloverbuds to the kids when they pass the flyer out. If they haven’t been, to find out if there is already a Cloverbud in the classroom and let them talk a little bit about it.”

“When we are in the classrooms and visiting, we also send them a flyer that is geared directly towards the parents.” – P3 FG3

“I guess our biggest thing here is brochures to the schools that go home to parents. They include the club information in them and how to contact the clubs and that kind of stuff. I guess here, that’s the most successful thing we do.” – P5 FG2

Events emerged as a major theme for most successful recruitment strategies. The “events” category overlaps with “schools” and “displays and information.” A participant in focus group one discussed a 4-H open house that she advertises through all of the schools in the county. Another event that was advertised through the schools was a beginning of the year 4-H event where members were encouraged to bring friends. The county holds an Easter egg hunt and other activities in which the kids could participate.

“They could bring a friend with them; that was kind of our selling point,” participant 2 from focus group one said. “It makes them want to join the program.” Another participant spoke of a similar event, called the “4-H Winter Fair.” Participant 5 discussed the event saying, “They could do hands-on projects making bags to take home; there was food;
everything was free; there was information on enrollment, a bookstore if they wanted to purchase 4-H books…” The event was advertised through local newspapers, newsletters, and flyers. Other participants discussed 4-H night open houses and Saturday events.

**The most important aspect to the success of a 4-H Cloverbud program**

As a final question at the end of the focus groups, participants were asked to discuss the most important aspects to the success of a 4-H Cloverbud program. Themes and discussions fell into the research question one. The major themes for the success of a 4-H Cloverbud program included: a) volunteers and b) activities. Extension Professionals discussed that the success of 4-H Cloverbud programs and recruiting for programs greatly depends on volunteers. From being organized to providing fun activities, communicating with parents, and caring about the kids, volunteers were noted as an important aspect of the program. For example, Participant 3 from focus group three said, “I would just reiterate the whole volunteer piece, because if you have the key, caring volunteer in there, they can make anything happen, even without curriculum and everything else.”

“I think that volunteers are one of the most important things. Having them well trained and knowing how to incorporate the Cloverbuds into a well rounded program.” – P1 FG2

“You could have a volunteer who just basically goes through the motions within a Cloverbud program, or you could have the one who kind of goes that step above and really gets them involved. I have one program in the county, it’s just, they go above and beyond, and I think that’s why their club program is so successful.” – P1 FG3

Another prominent theme was activities and making the Cloverbud members feel special. Participants in all three focus groups spoke about allowing the Cloverbuds to
participate in fun activities and make the members feel comfortable and important.

During focus group one, Participant 2 gave the example, “The more things and activities that we have for the little ones that they can invite a non-4-H member to, that is just going to help the non-4-H member say, ‘you know what mom, I think I want to do this next year.’”

“I think the fact that they are doing something different from the older members. In most of our clubs, the Cloverbuds meet with the bigger club. They do their pledges and all of that, and then they separate out and go to another room and do all of their activities. So, parents really do see them as separate and special.” – P5 FG3

**Research Question #2: What marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/guardians?**

Focus group participants were also asked questions that were developed purposely to find marketing techniques that have not been successful in recruiting for the 4-H Cloverbud program. The following sections contain responses to the focus group questions: a) barriers while marketing Cloverbud programs and b) attempts to recruit for the Cloverbud program but discontinued.

**Barriers while marketing Cloverbud programs**

The top themes for barriers while marketing the 4-H Cloverbud program included: a) school limitations, b) volunteers, and c) 4-H stereotypes. With the focus group discussions regarding research question one, schools were a major theme for successful recruitment; however, with the discussions concerning the barriers for recruitment, *school limitations* emerged as a major theme. Participant 6 from focus group
three stated, “I know several said they go into the classrooms, and for me, the resources to be able to do that, time resources, is a barrier.” Others agreed that there is not enough time to visit all the schools and go to the kindergarten through second grade classes. Getting in during school hours became a problem for some Extension Professionals because of busy school schedules. “We had some problems getting in during school hours because of schedules being so busy and everything” – P8 FG3. Some participants discussed that schools were not even cooperating by passing out flyers. Participant 4 in focus group one said, “So most of the districts have just said no, you can’t pass out flyers in our school or they will tell us we can bring one flyer to the entire school, so you know how successful that kind of thing is.”

*Volunteers* transpired as a major theme for barriers for recruitment across all three focus groups. “New volunteers for new clubs would be a barrier,” said participant 3 in focus group three. Participant 3 in focus group two confirmed this barrier by stating, “Probably our biggest barrier… is having enough volunteers in the clubs that are willing to give time to the program outside of the business meeting.” Others suggested the “mindset” of current advisors is a problem. Some experienced advisors “view the Cloverbud program as baby-sitting,” and others “don’t want younger kids back in their club.” Whether the problem is that the clubs are too full, there are inexperienced advisors working with 4-H Cloverbuds, or no individuals willing to work with Cloverbuds, lack of good volunteers to lead the 4-H Cloverbud program is a barrier for many of the Extension Professionals in the focus groups.

“It is harder for me to find clubs because some of our clubs that do the Cloverbuds had
reached their maximum for the numbers that they were wanting, so it is getting harder for me to place them.” – P1 FG3

“No all of my clubs have Cloverbuds, and I run into the challenge that if you get someone in one end of county that wants to join Cloverbuds, I don’t always have a club geographically close to them.” – P6 FG1

Another theme that was discussed as a barrier amongst a few participants throughout the focus groups was the stereotype that 4-H equals fair and animals. Participant 5 from focus group three stated, “I just think a lot of times parents look into it, but when they find out that their kids can’t shown an animal at the fair, they don’t join.” Other participants in focus group three agreed with the statement. Participant 4 in focus group two said, “People have the notion that 4-H is a project and it is livestock… and you have to explain that it’s very beneficial to them at this young age, and they are not really ready for competition in livestock…”

Participants in focus group three suggested that time constraints and children being too busy are other barriers for recruitment. Participant 3 stated, “Kids are already involved in too many things and 4-H is just an added activity… kids are too busy.” The focus group participants agreed that other activities and busy schedules are pulling potential 4-H Cloverbud members away and this is a barrier for recruitment efforts. “It’s being more demanding. It is true for all ages, but it use to not be as big with the younger kids, but now it is there.” – P2 FG3

Focus group one discussed another barrier for recruitment; however, some disagreed. Participant 6 said, “The barrier has been that there is a cut off on the
enrollment.” If the cutoff for enrollment is early spring, then any recruitment activities done in the summer would need to apply to the next year. Extension Professionals are forced to turn away interested families and tell them to come back next year. Other participants in the discussion noted that they allow 4-H Cloverbuds to enroll all year since they do not take projects to the fair.

“We allow kids to join and we call them social member, and they can do camp and all that.” – P6 FG1

**Attempts to recruit for the Cloverbud program that were discontinued**

Throughout all three focus groups, the ways Extension Professionals tried to recruit for the Cloverbud program but discontinued all dealt with the theme of “schools.” One participant said that the county used to provide hands on activities and recruit for the program during an after school program like parent-teacher conferences, but it just fell through. When discussing the parent teacher conference activities used for recruitment, Participant 6 from focus group one said, “I don’t know, the school quit doing that. It just kind of fell through.” Another participant said that they were not able to get into the schools anymore, but “we have still made the effort to get them the information.” Participant 5 in focus group three discussed a puppet program that they had used for recruitment in the schools in the past.

“The puppet skits would all have to do with joining 4-H. So when they would go into the schools and do a puppet show, they would have 20 kids wanting to talk to them when they were done because they would all want to join 4-H because of the puppets.”
The classroom visits were successful, but they had to discontinue due to lack of volunteers or school schedule.

**Research Question #3: What marketing messages are used most often?**

Extension Professionals were also asked questions concerning marketing messages that are used most often. Below are the results regarding a) messages Extension Professionals try to send out about the 4-H Cloverbud program b) messages that are the most successful with youth and c) messages that are the most successful with parents.

**Messages Extension Professionals try to send out about the 4-H Cloverbud program**

Focus group participants were asked to discuss messages that they try to convey about the 4-H Cloverbud program. Top themes that emerged for this focus group question regarding marketing messages included: a) Cloverbuds being part of the 4-H program, b) activity based and non-competitive, c) age appropriate, and d) content. Many Extension Professionals expressed that they tried to send out the message that *Cloverbuds are part of 4-H* and children gain 4-H experience. Participants spoke about educating parents and potential 4-H Cloverbuds that the Cloverbud program is “just as important as the others” and it is an opportunity to “get their feet wet with the 4-H experience.” For example, participant 8 in focus group three said, “I try to keep it away from the whole issue of, ‘well we can’t show things at the fair.’ We talk about all of the things they can do at the fair instead.”

“It is all youth development programming, just doing it in different ways.” – P6 FG1

Participants also said they stress the message that 4-H Cloverbuds is *activity based and non-competitive*. Participant 2 in focus group two stated, “They have
immediate success in having completed their activities right there in the meeting.”

Multiple Extension Professionals stated that it was important to emphasis that the activities are non-competitive.

“I stress that Cloverbuds is non-competitive. That it is more of a fun interactive activity to get the kids involved in.” – P8 FG3

“They are not competing for ribbons or prizes, and are very much age appropriate developmental activities.” – P4 FG1

Following the non-competitive and activity based aspect comes the theme “age appropriate.” Focus group participants noted that it is important to relay the message of what ages 4-H Cloverbuds target and that the activities are age appropriate. For example, Participant 3 in focus group 1 said, “We still try to emphasize that the children this age need to do things that are age appropriate and the Cloverbud program is doing that.”

“When we have parents who have kinds now, who are coming in and they know what 4-H is all about, we still try to emphasize that the children this age need to do things that are age appropriate.” – P3 FG1

“One thing we missed here is age. I would assume we are all pointing that out also. That it is for Kindergarten to second graders.” – P2 FG3

According to some of the participants, the 4-H Cloverbud program is age appropriate because it is “research based.” Participants from all three focus groups suggested that content was a message that they try to send out to potential Cloverbud families. Participant 2 from focus group two stated, “They get an opportunity to explore a variety of subject areas too. Sometimes with our older youth members, they do specialize
in a particular subject area. But with Cloverbuds, they can explore a variety of areas.”
“The curriculum is excellent…. It is developed through the university.” – P4 FG2

A couple Extension Professionals said that they emphasize that 4-H Cloverbud programs *promote life skills* such as “self-esteem and growth” as well as “cooperative learning and social skills.” For example, Participant 7 in focus group three stated, “I also suggest that we are promoting self-esteem and growth among the younger kids – cooperative learning and social skills.” Finally, one participant suggested that the message that Cloverbud programs are “teacher-centered instead of the clubs being run by members like the older 4-H club” is an important message to convey.

**Messages that are the most successful with youth**

One theme emerged when discussing successful messages for recruiting young children into the 4-H Cloverbud program. Participants from all three focus groups suggested *that fun activities* were the message they communicate to youth. “We always talk about fun activities that they can do with their friends, and that seems to be a drawing card for them,” Participant 2 mentioned during focus group three. Cloverbud camp became apparent as a subtheme for fun activities. Many of the Extension Professionals discussed that they utilize the message, “you get to go to camp.” The theme across all focus groups was to relay the message to children that 4-H Cloverbud programs offer fun activities, including camp.

“I think the big thing is that they get to go to the 4-H meetings with the older kids and they can still participate in some of those activities if they are doing a field trip, or a service project, or something they can still all work together and still do something with
their older brothers and sisters or whatever.” – P5 FG2

“Cloverbud day camp. That activity has been a draw for us.” – P6 FG1

“We do a day camp also, but we also have a Cloverbud overnight camp at the 4-H camp facilities. We are up to two of those now because we have so many parents.” – P1 FG1

Messages that are the most successful with parents

Extension Professionals were also asked what messages are the most successful with parents. Top themes that became apparent included: a) gaining life skills, and b) activity based and non-competitive. Participants in all three focus groups confirmed that conveying the message of *gaining life skills* was important for parents. The Cloverbud members are “building life skills.” Many of the participants spoke about social aspects such as public speaking and demonstrations, and learning to work in groups. For example, Participant 3 from focus group one said, “I think the parents see those life skills, social skills, as something important that this program will provide those kinds of experiences in a safe place for their kids.”

“For lots of parents, it is public speaking. When we come to the fair they do an interview, and they have done their project or their little activity and they have brought it with them.” – P1 FG1

“I would agree, that they are building life skills, and some of what those life skills are, those social skills and that kind of thing are really important with parents.” – P2 FG3

*Activity based and non-competitive* also emerged as a theme in two of the focus groups. An Extension Professional in focus group one gave the example, “I have had parents who want to know if the kids are going to be active or just sitting.” Two other
topics briefly mentioned were the curriculum that 4-H Cloverbud members learn about, and the opportunity to begin involvement with 4-H. One participant stated, “It gives them a change to see and shadow some older kids within their 4-H club.”

“I would say it is some of those things we talked about earlier: being activity based and non-competitive, and so educational.” – P5 FG2

**Statewide marketing**

Another topic that was uncovered during the focus groups, but did not coincide with the study research questions dealt with statewide marketing and the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud website. Participants discussed that a “fun and interactive” statewide 4-H website would be a good recruitment tool. Participant 3 from focus group three said, “I think that our marketing and promotion pieces need to be freshened up and they need to be new and different for different audiences.” Others suggested “uniform marketing” and continuing to make the website and state recruitment efforts better.

“If on the Ohio 4-H website, the Cloverbud section wasn’t a static site, you know if there were message boards, if there was a way that people could post information and get to do just what we are doing now.” – P4 FG1

“I agree, we need uniform marketing, but we also need to educate people in the counties that are working with the program in Extension about what Cloverbuds is.” – P7 FG3

**OSU Extension Expertise**

The next point that the participants spoke about, which did not fit directly under one of the research questions was OSU Extension expertise. Participants suggested that it is the responsibility of the Extension Professionals to share their expertise and
information with the volunteers. Participant 1 in focus group two said, “Sometimes we don’t do our job to making sure all the information is given to those who need to incorporate it.”

“Training, more activities, and places they [advisors] could go to look for things to do during their club meetings, so it has some structure, and it’s not just play time for 5 minutes or an hour while the older kids have their 4-H meeting.” – P4 FG1

“I think that the more stuff we can have available for our advisors that is either easy for them to pick up or to have on our county website for them to do, that they can just pull off quickly.” – P2 FG1

**Themes across research questions**

There were a few themes that became apparent across research questions. These themes included: a) schools b) volunteers and c) content.

**Schools**

While some Extension Professionals discussed that utilizing the school systems for recruitment efforts was an effective tool, others noted that there were limitations with recruiting through schools. Many of the participants suggested that visiting the school systems and sending out flyers though the schools was the most effective recruitment tool. Some of the other Extension Professionals had problems with scheduling times to get into the schools, too many schools to visit, or lack of cooperation with passing out flyers.
Volunteers

In the research question regarding barriers and limitations with recruitment, participants discussed that lack of good, trained volunteers for the 4-H Cloverbud program was a problem. However, when speaking about the aspects which make 4-H Cloverbud programs and recruitment successful, Extension Professionals alluded to the fact that many times, volunteers are the key to the success. Club advisors obviously play an important part in determining how clubs operate.

Content/ Cloverbud Basics

When discussing strategies that are helpful in recruiting parents into the program, Extension Professionals noted that communicating information about 4-H Cloverbud basics and content facts was important to use with adults. Later, during questions about marketing messages, the theme emerged again as an important message to convey to potential Cloverbud parents.

Summary

Throughout the three focus groups conducted with 19 Ohio State University Extension Professionals, multiple themes emerged concerning the study research questions. Themes were coded and categorized, then reported according to research questions. Reoccurring themes, which appeared in more than one research question, such as schools, volunteers, and content, were discussed.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate current marketing and recruitment techniques used with the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program. The objectives were to gain enhanced understanding of several issues: a) what strategies Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/guardians, b) what marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/guardians, and c) what marketing messages are used most often. This chapter discusses the findings of the study, limitations, and implications for theory, future research, and practice.

Summary of Study

The Ohio 4-H program is continually struggling with issues of lower enrollment numbers and retention of those members currently in 4-H. Research shows that when students join 4-H at an earlier age, they are more likely to stay in the program (Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005). However, little research has been done concerning marketing to the youngest group of 4-H members, the 4-H Cloverbuds. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore Ohio Extension Professionals’ current marketing and recruitment efforts for 4-H Cloverbuds. In particular, the study considered strategies for recruitment, barriers, and unsuccessful efforts, as well as messages most often utilized for recruitment.
This study was based on two connected theoretical frameworks. First, the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) which suggests that behavior is controlled by intention to perform the behavior. Secondly, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) also suggests that behavior is controlled by intention to perform the behavior, but has more stipulations on what forms intention. Perceived behavior control, or the perceived difficulty level of performing a specific behavior, is included in determining intentions for performing the behavior in the Theory of Planned Behavior. In the current study, the focus was on parents’ intention to perform the behavior of enrolling their children into 4-H Cloverbuds. The perceived difficulty level of enrolling the children into 4-H Cloverbuds and attending meetings, as well as perceived thoughts of what others will think about the behavior, and personal attitude toward the behavior could all play a role in whether or not parents choose to enroll their children into 4-H Cloverbud programs. The Theory of Planned Behavior and Theory of Reasoned Action help explain reasons why parents would or would not enroll their children into the 4-H Cloverbud program. The Theory of Planned Behavior goes further to explain that if people perceive that they are too busy, or don’t have the means to join 4-H Cloverbuds, they will not enroll their children into the program.

In an effort to answer the research questions, a qualitative study was designed to investigate factors concerning successful and unsuccessful marketing and recruitment techniques for 4-H Cloverbuds in Ohio. Nineteen Ohio State University Extension Professionals participated in one of three online focus groups, held via WebEx, to collect data to answer the research questions. Focus group participants were either Extension
Educators or Extension Program Coordinators/Assistants in Ohio, who have active 4-H Cloverbuds in their county program. The Extension Professionals had been employed with OSU Extension anywhere from one to 30 years, involved with 4-H Cloverbuds from one through 13 plus years, all held Bachelor’s degrees or Master’s degrees, and ages ranged from 26 to 60. Participants represented 19 different counties throughout the state. The participants were very typical of Extension Professionals in Ohio; they were a good representation of the population. Only one male participated in the study, 18 were female. This could be a representation of those who work with the younger 4-H members, the 4-H Cloverbuds. The researcher sent the email to the 4-H Educators in the counties, regardless of gender, and asked them to pass the email on to the professional who was most familiar with the 4-H Cloverbud program.

Significant findings in regards to marketing and recruiting for the 4-H Cloverbud program which crossed multiple research questions included a) utilizing the schools for recruitment, b) conveying the content of the Cloverbud program in messages, and c) using good volunteers. While some Extension Professionals discussed school recruitment as their most successful form of marketing the 4-H Cloverbud program, others spoke of limitations through the school system, such as too many schools to visit, lack of cooperation from administrators, or a school schedule that is too busy. The findings noticeably discovered that school recruitment had an effect on when and where educators marketed the Cloverbud program.

Content of the 4-H Cloverbud curriculum was also recognized as a theme across research questions. Extension Professionals noted that they use the basics of the program
or content of lessons as a recruitment strategy. Content was also described as an important message that Extension professional use to recruit for the program.

A final theme that crossed research questions was 4-H Cloverbud volunteers. Many of the focus group participants alluded to the fact that good volunteers were a key to the success of the Cloverbud program and one of the best forms of recruitment. However, other Extension Professionals saw the volunteer factor as a limitation; not having enough advisors to work with the new Cloverbud members, volunteers who do not want Cloverbuds in their clubs, volunteers who are not good with young children, or Cloverbud clubs in the wrong geographic area. The study results revealed that the role of an advisor has a significant effect on the satisfaction of current members, and in turn, recruitment of new 4-H Cloverbuds.

In regards to research question one, strategies used to recruit for the 4-H Cloverbud program, findings included a) advertisements and giveaways, b) events, c) newspapers and media, d) word of mouth, e) displays, f) activities, and g) OSU Extension expertise. Schools, content, and volunteers were discussed amongst multiple research questions. Participants discussed the success of these recruitment strategies.

Findings for research questions two, marketing techniques that have not been successful for recruitment, included schools and volunteers as limitations, which were discussed in a positive light during the previous discussion. However, a new theme emerged, the stereotype that 4-H is equivalent to fair and animals. Extension Professionals discussed that potential 4-H Cloverbud families have preconceived notions about 4-H, which effects whether or not they choose to enroll in the program. The few
limitations that were mentioned seemed to be able to overcome.

Research question three, marketing messages, reiterated the importance of the message about the 4-H Cloverbud program content. Other themes that emerged throughout discussion included messages about: a) Cloverbuds are part of the 4-H program, b) activity based and non-competitive, c) age appropriate, and d) life skills. The messages were thought of as successful with recruiting for the 4-H Cloverbud program.

Discussions

Research Question #1: What strategies do Extension Professionals use to recruit Cloverbuds and Cloverbud parents/guardians?

A major theme discussed during the focus groups conveyed that word-of-mouth and a social connection to the 4-H Cloverbud program was a widely successful recruitment strategy. In chapter two, the literature about the Theory of Planned Behavior and Theory of Reasoned Action discusses the influence of subjective norm in intentions to perform behaviors (Ajzen, 2002a; Ajzen, 1980). If friends, family, or other acquaintances are suggesting that a parent enroll his or her child into the 4-H Cloverbud program, that encourages the parent to perceive that it is important to others and greatly influences the subjective norm; therefore, intention to perform the behavior is strengthened. When parents have a social connection with the 4-H Cloverbud program or other individuals are saying that it is a good program, the subjective norm becomes more positive and intention to enroll children into the Cloverbud program is stronger.

Harachi, Catalano, and Hawkins (1997) also support the success of word of mouth with their study regarding the recruitment and retention of parents to a training program
targeted at substance abuse prevention. The literature shows that a personal connection was an important recruitment tool. The literature also supported the use of flyers and brochures, used in displays, which were also found to be themes in the current study.

Other literature suggests that persuasive marketing to children takes place during peak television times for children (Kelly, Hattersley, Kind, & Flood, 2008). This could explain why many of the Extension Professionals felt their largest recruitment success took place in the schools and at large events. The largest possible audiences are in those locations. Extension Professionals can reach the most significant number of potential Cloverbud members in a school setting, or a sizeable event, such as the fair or an open house. Kelly, Hattersley, Kind, and Flood (2008) also found that promotional characters and premium offers attract children, which coincides with this research study in that giveaways were a theme for effective recruitment, and children were attracted to the fun activities. Giveaways and take-home projects at events could be much like premium offers.

In regards to recruitment in schools, some of the literature also discussed utilizing school systems for program recruitment. For example, recruitment included announcements at schools, parent-teacher meetings, and posters on boards at schools with condition listed (Heinrichs, 2006). The fact that school systems were successful for some of the participants coincided with past research.
Research Question #2: What marketing techniques have not been successful in recruiting Cloverbuds/Cloverbud parents/guardians?

A theme mentioned by one focus group during the study was that children are too busy to have the added activity of 4-H Cloverbuds. Since the theme only emerged in one focus group, results must be taken with caution. However, Ajzen’s (1985) Theory of Planned Behavior corresponds with the theme that if parents perceive that they are too busy, they will not perform the behavior. The TPB includes the aspect of perceived behavioral control, where intention to perform the behavior is determined, in part, by the perceived ability to perform the behavior. If parents perceive that their children are too busy to become members of the 4-H Cloverbud program, their intentions to enroll will lessen, and they most likely will not perform the behavior of enrolling their children into the program.

Another barrier found in some of the discussions is a stereotype that 4-H equals fairs and animals. This “attitude” could be negative in a couple different ways. Some people may not join 4-H Cloverbuds because they believe that all 4-H deals with animals and fairs, which is not their forte. Others may not join the Cloverbud program because they want to show animals (or want their children to show animals), but the 4-H Cloverbud program is non-competitive. The attitude about the 4-H Cloverbud program driving intentions to join or not to join relates to the Theory of Planned Behavior and Theory of Reasoned Action in that attitudes determine intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 2002a; Ajzen, 1980). This theme relates back to the opening excerpt in this paper from an article in The New Youth Times, “Eleven-year-old Emily Wunderlich took her
heifer, a Polled Hereford named Reba, to the Sussex County fair. They came home 4-H champions. To many people, that image -- a little girl leading a big animal and clutching a prize ribbon -- is what 4-H is all about…” (Keller, 1996). Extension Professionals need to combat the stereotype attitude that 4-H only applies to showing animals at the fair.

Two major themes that emerged as barriers were volunteers and utilizing the school system for recruitment; however, both of these themes were also found to be successful recruitment strategies. The fact that volunteers were both a major success and a limitation could mean that Extension Professionals need to conduct more recruitment and training of volunteers, which would help turn the limitation into a success. Volunteers have the potential to be a very successful recruitment tool for the 4-H Cloverbud program, if the right people are used in the right capacity. In regards to schools, the limitation for some participants was also a huge success for others. Extension Professionals may need to look for new ways to utilize the schools so the recruitment methods could be a success for those counties too.

The limitations for recruitment that were discussed in the focus groups were not about marketing attempts that Extension Professionals had tried in the past and were not successful; limitations involved barriers to continuing the marketing attempts. Extension Professionals expressed that the recruitment techniques were successful, but they had to quit for one reason or another, whether it was schedules, getting into the schools, or other limitations. The fact that there were not many unsuccessful attempts reported could mean that most marketing efforts that Extension Professionals try have some success. It could also mean that Extension Professionals have not been trying many new recruitment
Research Question #3: What marketing messages are used most often?

A theme that emerged as a successful message to convey to parents was the life skills gained through the 4-H Cloverbud program. The literature demonstrates that children benefit cognitively, socially, and emotionally from working together (Johnson-Pynn & Nisbet, 2002). Additional research shows that 4-H provides a positive relationship with a caring adult, a safe environment, and opportunity for mastery (Gregorie, 2004). Results from the focus groups express that life skills are a drawing message for potential Cloverbud parents. The literature shows that programs like 4-H Cloverbuds are beneficial to children in gaining life skills, and this study finds that parents like to hear that information. Therefore, Extension Professionals should emphasize the message when promoting the 4-H Cloverbud program.

Participants also reported that the role of 4-H within the Cloverbud program was an important message to send to potential Cloverbud families. This is significant for those who know what 4-H is, more than those who had never been in 4-H. If siblings or parents had been in the traditional 4-H program, it may be a draw that the 4-H Cloverbud program is an opportunity to be involved in 4-H at an earlier age. However, it is important to stress that the 4-H Cloverbud program is age appropriate, activity based, and non-competitive, according to the participants. Within the discussions about barriers, participants discussed that the 4-H stereotype could be a limitation. Some families would want the Cloverbud program to be about competitions and showing animals, while others would not join the program because of that stereotype. This means that Extension
Professionals have a very important job of communicating the message about the benefits of the 4-H Cloverbud program, and explaining the appropriate connection to 4-H.

**Limitations**

The sample for this study was limited to those who agreed to participate from the list of Ohio State University Extension Professionals who had 4-H Cloverbud members in their county. At the time the study took place, OSU Extension was going through a restructuring period, including reductions in force (RIFs) lowering staffing and increasing workload. Extension Professionals were going through a time of heavy workloads and stress of the unknown. Even though the data collection was deep, results cannot be generalized beyond the group who took part in the study. While only three focus groups containing 19 Extension Professionals were held, individuals who participated were fairly diverse in terms of age, years of employment, involvement in the program, and location within the state of Ohio and by the end of the third focus group it was evident saturation had been achieved. The focus group research method was useful in finding intensity and understanding for the topic at hand, but not an extensive span of participants.

**Implications**

**Implications for Theory**

The Theory of Reasoned Action (1980) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (1985) are useful for understanding the behavior of joining 4-H Cloverbuds. Both of the theories help understand the thought process behind behaviors. According to the theories, intentions direct the actual behavior; therefore, if a parent intends to perform the behavior of enrolling their child into the 4-H Cloverbud program, then the behavior will occur.
Perceptions about what others believe about the 4-H Cloverbud program and about the difficulty of being in the program will influence intentions, as well as personal attitudes about enrolling in the program.

The TRA and TpB help us understand the thoughts that go through a parent’s mind before they decide to enroll or not to enroll their child into the 4-H Cloverbud program. The theories help us realize the importance of peer connections to the program, because people are concerned about what others think. They also help us understand why people who have been involved in 4-H themselves or have other children involved in the program are more likely to enroll their children in the program. TpB also begins to explain the reasoning behind adults who perceive that they are too busy for 4-H activities so they do not enroll their children in the 4-H program.

**Implications for Future Research**

This study prompted further questions that could be investigated in relation to information about marketing and recruitment for the 4-H Cloverbud program. The small sample size could be addressed by replicating the study with additional Extension Professionals from other counties throughout the state to see if major themes continued to be consistent. The study could also be replicated in other states to see if themes are consistent around the nation.

Another possibility to further research would be to use the present study’s findings to design a survey research study with all the 4-H Extension Professionals in the state questioning their experiences with recruitment and marketing to Cloverbuds. The themes from this study could be used to create the foundation of survey questions. A
survey would allow more Extension Professionals to participate, creating more data.

Similar to the present study, qualitative research should be conducted with parents of 4-H Cloverbud members. Studies have been conducted regarding parents’ perceptions of the program (Ferrari, Houge, & Scheer, 2004), but a study should be conducted in regards to effective marketing and recruitment techniques. Parents could discuss what messages draw them in to the program, as well as other strategies discussed with the Extension professionals. Ideally, it would be good to collect information from Cloverbud aged children exploring the marketing and recruitment efforts that are appealing to them; however, research with young children can be very difficult.

**Implications for Practice**

Findings from the study may be useful for practice in marketing and recruiting for 4-H Cloverbud programs. In the future, Extension Professionals can utilize displays, news articles, events, give-away products, and advertisements to market the 4-H Cloverbud program. Word of mouth was a theme that was discussed widely as a successful recruitment tool. Extension Professionals should find methods to increase control over word of mouth to better use the strategy to benefit the program, such as having members invite friends to activities, and give out awards to those who bring friends. Programs could include recruitment as a training session for volunteers and teen leaders, to learn more about spreading the word about the 4-H Cloverbud program. Extension Professionals could also use volunteers to recruit friends, family, and acquaintances in an organized manner.

Along the same lines, OSU Extension expertise was identified as a theme through
the study. Participants noted that OSU Extension professionals should know more information about 4-H Cloverbuds, train volunteers about the program, and give the resources to those who can utilize them. Volunteers were seen as a theme for success of the 4-H Cloverbud program, and a limitation of the program. This could mean that volunteers need better training for Cloverbud program preparedness, and Cloverbuds should be placed in clubs that work well with Cloverbuds. Recruitment of new volunteers for the program could also be a solution to the limitation about “good” volunteers.

In regards to the school theme, another category crossing research questions, Extension Professionals could look into more options with schools. Some professionals seem to have great success with recruitment with schools, while others are not able to work with the schools for some reason or another. Extension professionals could work with teachers by offering curriculum that goes with the class lessons and then also allows the mention of the 4-H Cloverbud program. One of the participants during the focus groups discussed that they give the teachers information and have them talk about the Cloverbud program during class, or allow members of the program to share their experiences. Another option could be to train a team of 4-H teenagers to speak to kindergarten through third grade classes about 4-H Cloverbuds. The Extension Professional would be responsible for training the teens, but not going to every class with them. Youth could also form some sort of mentoring program, before or after school, where they perform Cloverbud activities as a recruitment activity. School recruitment seems to be a major success for many counties; therefore, Extension Professionals should find methods to connect with the schools.
In order to combat the stereotype that 4-H equals fair and animals, OSU Extension could employ fresh, new statewide marketing. Although the topic did not fit exactly under any of the study’s research questions, many of the focus group participants suggested that OSU Extension put together fresh, new marketing materials and an interactive website. An interactive website would encourage families to visit the website and learn about the 4-H Cloverbud program. Educators and 4-H Cloverbud volunteers could use the website to communicate successful lesson plans and other important information. Up to date, modern flyers, brochures, and other materials would be useful for recruitment efforts. New materials may help Extension Professionals show the program’s true image.

**Conclusion**

This study explored marketing and recruitment efforts for 4-H Cloverbud programs. The overall 4-H enrollment numbers have decreased from years past, opportunities for other youth activities have increased, and Ohio State University Extension Professionals have heavier workloads than ever. However, 4-H professionals must understand the importance of marketing our programs in an effort to recruit new members. The 4-H Cloverbud program is an effective avenue to enroll and retain new membership. Working together to share ideas and explore successful and unsuccessful marketing strategies will enable the 4-H Cloverbud program to grow and prosper, thus developing the entire 4-H program.
REFERENCES


Lloyd, J.E. V., & Hertzman, C. (2009). From kindergarten readiness to fourth-grade assessment: Longitudinal analysis with linked population data


The Ohio State University Extension. (1996). 4-H Cloverbud Program – Enjoy the Thrills, Develop the Skills. [Brochure]. Columbus, OH.


A: Email Invitation Letter

Dear ____________:

Hello, my name is Libby McNeal and I am a Program Assistant at the OSU Extension Office in Highland County and graduate student at Ohio State working on a Master’s Thesis about 4-H Cloverbud recruitment and marketing. I recently sent an email about participating in focus groups at Teen Conference or Volunteer Conference. After finding out that neither conference is convenient for most Educators and Program Assistants to participate in the focus group, I am going to conduct online focus groups via WebEx. Using the online focus groups, I want to find out what Extension professionals’ strategies and recruitment techniques are with the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program. I would like to conduct these online focus groups at four different times so to reach a variety of Extension Professionals throughout the state.

As I mentioned in the first email, I am looking for Educators and Program Assistants who work with 4-H Cloverbud programs who are willing to participate in the study. If you do not currently work with this program, I ask that you please pass this letter on to whoever is most involved with the 4-H Cloverbud program in your county.

The focus group will take about an hour and a half to complete and all participants will be entered to win an OSU football signed by Coach Tressel. All comments will remain anonymous and you may leave at anytime if you wish not to continue.

If you are interested, the focus groups will be held via WebEx on April 13 at 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. April 14 at 9:00 a.m. April 20 at 2:00 p.m.

I will be calling you at the beginning of next week to see if there is a date you could participate, or you can contact me at mcneal.65@osu.edu or 937-403-6752.

Thank you,

Libby (Duncan) McNeal
Agricultural Communications Graduate Student
Extension Program Assistant
OSU Extension, Highland County
937-403-6752
**B: Focus group reminder email with WebEx information**

NAME,

This email is to serve as a reminder that you have signed up to participate in an online focus group about recruiting 4-H Cloverbuds. Your focus group time is on **April 13 at 9:00 am via WebEx.**

The focus group will take about an hour and a half to complete and all participants will be entered to win an OSU football signed by Coach Tressel. The drawing will take place after the focus groups are complete, and I will contact the winner. All comments will remain anonymous and you may log off at anytime if you wish not to continue.

**The WebEx information you need is listed below.**

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at mcneal.65@osu.edu or 937-403-6752.

Thanks again!

Libby McNeal  
Agricultural Communications Graduate Student  
Extension Program Assistant  
OSU Extension, Highland County  
937-403-6752

Hello ,

Libby McNeal invites you to attend this online meeting.

**Topic:** 4-H Cloverbud Focus Group #1 - McNeal  
**Date:** Monday, April 13, 2009  
**Time:** 9:00 am, Eastern Daylight Time (GMT -04:00, New York)  
**Meeting Number:** 687 537 930  
**Meeting Password:** gobucks

Please click the link below to see more information, or to join the meeting.

To join the online meeting

2. Enter your name and email address.  
3. Enter the meeting password: gobucks  
4. Click "Join Now".
To join the meeting on iPhone

Go to wbx://osu.webex.com/osu?MK=687537930&MPW=c023d5796452ad1d80263a05d11dc2a42b8c19c5d7c88c0e84ae3731b73a3d34

Don't have the iPhone WebEx application yet?
Go to http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewSoftware?id=298844386

To join the teleconference only

Call-in toll-free number (US/Canada): 866-699-3239
Call-in toll number (US/Canada): 1-408-792-6300

For assistance

1. Go to https://osu.webex.com/osu/mc
2. On the left navigation bar, click "Support".
C: Demographic survey

Focus Groups of Extension Professionals’ Recruitment Strategies for 4-H Cloverbuds

How many years have you been employed with OSU Extension?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 15-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36+

What county do you currently work in?

What is your highest level of education?

- High School Graduate
- Associate’s Degree
- Bachelor’s Degree
- Master’s Degree
- Ph.D.

What was your academic major in your highest level of education?

In Ohio, the Cloverbud program was established in 1996. How many years have you personally been working with Cloverbuds?

- 0-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13+

Were you in 4-H or Cloverbuds as a child?

- Yes
- No

Do you have any relatives currently in a 4-H Cloverbud program?

- Yes
- No

Current Position _____________________ Age _____ Gender _____________
D: Confidentiality form

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Focus Groups of Extension Professionals’ Recruitment Strategies for 4-H Cloverbuds
Researcher: Elizabeth McNeal, Agricultural Communications Graduate Student

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to discuss the marketing and recruitment strategies used with the Ohio 4-H Cloverbud program. Findings will be used to help facilitate recruitment, program development, and advertising.

Procedures/Tasks: The focus group will allow you to share your opinions in an open and receptive environment. You will also be asked to discuss effective and ineffective methods of recruitment that you have utilized in the past. A short questionnaire will also be given to you to determine your experience with 4-H and the Cloverbud Program.

Duration: The focus group will last no more than 2 hours.

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks or benefits to participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by the law. You will be assigned a code number. Your name will not be connected to any comments. The list connecting your name and code number will be stored in a locked file in the researcher’s office. The discussion will be audio-taped. Only the researcher will have access to the survey, tapes, notes, and transcripts. They will be kept in a locked file. When the study has been completed and data has been analyzed, the list and the tapes will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

Incentives: You will be entered into a drawing for an OSU Football signed by Football Coach Jim Tressel.

Participant Rights: You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

Contacts and Questions: For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Libby McNeal at 937-403-6752 or mcneal.65@osu.edu. For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Signing the consent form
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant: ___________________________ Date: ________________
Principal Investigator: _____________________ Date: ________________
E: Focus group questions

- Please share how you have been involved with the 4-H Cloverbud program?

- What recruitment strategies have you used to create interest in your county Cloverbud program?

- What recruitment strategies have you used to create interest in your county Cloverbud program?
  - How are recruitment strategies different for parents versus youth?

- Of the techniques you have tried describe the most successful recruitment strategies?

- What barriers have you run into while marketing Cloverbud programs?

- Tell us about ways you tried to recruit for the Cloverbud program but discontinued:
  - Describe the reasons these ideas that were not successful.

- What messages do you try to send out about the Cloverbud program?

- What messages are the most successful with youth?

- What messages are the most successful with youth?
  - What messages do you see as the most successful with Parents?

- What is the most important thing to the success of a Cloverbud program?

- What are other things about Cloverbuds that you thought we were going to discuss today and did not, or something that we have missed that you would like to share?
F: Moderator Guide

Moderator Reads: Hello and welcome to our session. Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedules to discuss 4-H Cloverbud recruitment with us. My name is: Libby McNeal. _____ will also be with us today helping to ensure we capture your opinions completely.

You have been selected to help us because you are an Ohio State Extension Professional who has experience working with Cloverbuds and their families.

Before we begin, please let me share with you a few things to help our discussion today. Be assured there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, but rather differing opinions. Please feel free to share with us your point of view, even if it differs from what others have said. Please speak up and only one person should talk at a time so we can clearly understand you. We are audio recording today’s session because we do not want to miss any comments. We’ll be on a first-name basis, but in our later reports there will not be any names attached to comments. Be assured your comments will be confidential in as far as a group discussion can be.

My role here is to ask you questions and listen. I will not be participating in the conversation, but I want you to feel free to talk with one another. I’ll be asking around 12 questions, and I’ll be moving the discussion from question to question. There is a tendency in these discussions for some people to talk a lot and some people to not say much. But it is very important for us to hear all of your opinions as all of you have different experiences with the subject. So if one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask you to let others respond. And if you aren’t talking much, I may ask for your opinion.

Our session will last about an hour and a half. We are not going to take any breaks. If you have your cell phone we ask that you please turn it off. If you need to leave it on, please leave the room to answer it and return as quickly as you can. I have a powerpoint with the questions that I will be asking. When I ask the question, you will also be able to read it on the screen. You may use the web chat to ask further questions or insert responses if you wish, but we will be using the phone for the bulk of our discussions.

Let’s begin.

Introductory Information

Moderator Reads:
Before we begin with the focus group discussion questions, I’ll have everyone please state your name and the county where you work. We will begin with the first name on the screen and move down the list.

The first question I am going to ask differently from the remainder of the questions, in that I will ask the question (show it on the screen) and pause for a few moments. Then I will ask someone to respond. Everyone will have the opportunity to respond to the first question. After the first question, anyone may respond to any of the questions at any time.

• [1] Please share how you have been involved with the 4-H Cloverbud program?

Recruitment Strategies:

Moderator Reads: The next questions will be about some of the recruitment strategies you have used in the past with 4-H Cloverbuds.

• [2] What recruitment strategies have you used to create interest in your county Cloverbud program? (Activities, promotional materials??)
  ○ [3] How are recruitment strategies different for parents versus youth?
• Of the techniques you have tried, describe the most successful recruitment strategies? What caused it to be so successful?

**Barriers:**

**Moderator Reads:** As you know, many ideas we try are unsuccessful.

• What barriers have you run into while marketing Cloverbud programs?

• Tell us about ways you tried to recruit for the Cloverbud program but discontinued:
  o Describe the reasons these ideas were not successful. What factors caused them to be unsuccessful?

**Program Messages:**

**Moderator Reads:** Many people have different ideas or concepts about 4-H. Some people have never even heard of the 4-H Cloverbud program. We would like to find out what point you try to address when speaking about the Cloverbud program.

• What messages do you try to send out about the Cloverbud program?

• What messages are the most successful with youth?
  o What messages do you see as the most successful with Parents?

**Concluding Discussion**

**Moderator Reads:** As we have talked today about the marketing the 4-H Cloverbud program:

• What is the most important thing to the success of a Cloverbud program?

• What are other things about Cloverbuds that you thought we were going to discuss today and did not, or something that we have missed that you would like to share?

**Moderator Reads:** As we explained at the beginning of the session, the purpose of this focus group was to get your feedback and opinions on successful and unsuccessful marketing strategies for 4-H Cloverbuds. Your comments will be useful to understand what recruitment techniques work best.

I am now going to try to summarize the main points of today’s discussion. (Key messages and big ideas that developed from the discussion) The main topics…

• What have we missed?

Thank you for taking time out of your day to share your opinions with us. Your participation is greatly appreciated and has provided valuable insight into this topic. All of your names will be entered into the drawing for the OSU Football signed by Tressel. We will contact you if you are the winner. Thanks again for coming.
March 12, 2009

Protocol Number: 2009E0177
Protocol Title: FOCUS GROUPS OF EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS' RECRUITMENT
STRATEGIES FOR F-H CLOVERBUDS, Emily Rhoades, Elizabeth McNeal, Scott Scheer, CFAES Human & Community Resources Development
Type of Review: Request for Exempt Determination
ORRP Staff Contact: Phone: 614-688-0389
Email: pettey.66@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Rhoades,

The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced protocol exempt from IRB review.

Date of Exempt Determination: 3/3/2009
Qualifying Exemption Category: 2

Please note the following:

- Only OSU employees and students who have completed CITI training and are named on the signature page of the application are approved as OSU Investigators in conducting this study.
- No procedural changes may be made in exempt research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, instruments, enrollment numbers, etc.).
- Per university requirements, all research-related records (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least three years after the research has ended.
- It is the responsibility of the investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the ORRP staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Cheri Pettey, MA, Certified IRB Professional
Senior Protocol Analyst—Exempt Research

Exempt Determination
Version 1.0
FOCUS GROUP #1

I: Okay, first of all can everyone see my computer screen? I have a few things that I need to cover before we get started.

I am going to have each of you state your name and the county you are from:

(Confidential)

I: We will answer the first discussion question in order. …

Q1: Please share how you have been involved with the Cloverbud program.

P1: I’ve been involved in the 4-H Cloverbud program since my children were in 4-H and my oldest is 19, so he was in the program for 4 years and my daughter was in the program for 4 years. ______ (name) is a little bit different since she is multiple handicapped. That’s why we have the unique program in our state that deals with those kind of children. As far as being the educator, we do the programming in our office, but (__ name __), our program assistant in the summer does most of the programming at the fair and camps. We do have all of the kits in our office that can be signed out through our office. Other than that, ______ (the program assistant) pretty much takes care of it.

P2: I am an advisor also with a 4-H club within our county here and I get to work with another advisor by doing Cloverbud activities when the big kids have their meetings. So, we do activities during our meetings with the CLooverbuds. During our county fair, a lot of our kids, and probably all the way around, are saying can we have things on display during the week at the county fair. So the past couple years, we have always had a theme with our Cloverbuds that they will have something that will go into a booth that will hit with the theme. That kind of helps the kids and the advisors if they have a theme that they can kind of build with and helping them try to get something done for the county fair. And this year, for the first time ever, we are excited that we are going to be having a Cloverbud day camp here at the Extension office. We are going to be working with our camp counselors for the first time and doing activities during the day with our Cloverbuds. Then they can take the things that they made during the Cloverbud day camp, they will take to the fair and have that on display.

P3: In Union county we have started very slow and have a small club program. I work with interviewing any potential advisors, doing the advertising, recruitment, that type of thing. And we have a county-wide club that ______, our 4-H Educator, leads with a couple of volunteer advisors and I work with. We have, this year, 58 kids. My, it is quite a job with 58 kids! We have a day camp here in the county that we have. We have done a Cloverbud activity at the fair, but this year we are not going to be able to do that because of budget cuts and that kind of thing. So that is basically how I work with the Cloverbud program here in the county.

P4: I work with Cloverbuds on a county-wide basis. When I started about 5 or 6 years ago, there was a Cloverbud day camp and that was about the extent of the Cloverbud program. So what I’ve done over the past five years is develop county-wide Cloverbud activities in order to increase membership in the county clubs. And we have earned the individual clubs, and we have seen an increase in our numbers. We have a 2-day Cloverbud day camp every summer. Over the past couple years, I have done them in three week sections either in the spring or the fall. I’ve done a Cloverbud reading club in the evening where we picked a theme and read books and activities on early learning and literacy activities around those books. And right now I am in the middle of our Cloverbud cooking club. I have 12 little chefs coming for three weeks, and each Wednesday night we make a couple different dishes and talk about nutrition. They will go home with a cookbook at the end of the three week session. We are also going to have a dedicated Cloverbud booth at the fair this year. They have always been able to put their things into their club booth, but we are going to have a special Cloverbud booth for them this year.

P5: I’ve done a little bit with pretty much what everyone else has stated. We provide a one and sometimes a two-day Cloverbud camp. We have not ventured to an overnight camp at all in our Cloverbud program. We do have fair daily events, organized by myself and volunteers. And we do have an area for them to exhibit the projects that they work on individually or with their clubs throughout the year. We also have a one day project interview that they can bring any project that they can make or construct, or we have some of them that are very interested in small animals and with their older brothers and sisters, and sometimes they bring...
those to the project interviews as well. I also work with a team of adults that we select and train the camp counselors. We normally bring in anywhere from 4 to 18 counselors to help with camp, so we get those guys all ready to go. We also do a lot of 4-H Cloverbud recruiting in the schools. Every February we go out to recruit regular or junior 4-H members, we also do a lot of recruiting with the little guys and girls too, and of course, like P1 said, we have all the kits available that we encourage the volunteers to sign out and utilize. Especially at the volunteer training, we normally dedicate a segment of all the volunteer trainings to either myself doing a PR bit for Cloverbuds and Cloverbud activities, or I bring in, I do have a key leader for Cloverbuds in the county. And we typically have anywhere from about 85-100 Cloverbuds annually. And again, I work with them more on a county-basis too.

P6: Since I started here, I actually work with training for the Cloverbud advisors, I’m not sure if you were looking for that piece too. I do that every year, and we always have new people who come through the program. I do their training and orientation just specific to Cloverbuds. We do a Cloverbud day camp – we have done that for, I don’t know, probably 8-10 years. We usually pick a theme and then just run with that. I recruit older youth, from sixth grade through 10th grade, to serve as the Cloverbud camp counselors. We started last year doing a sharing time at the fair. It is pretty much an interview, but they get to come and bring something they have made and sit down with an adult and have like a mock interview. Many of the other people talked about, yes, they are able to exhibit for the week. We have special Cloverbud booths and they can put their stuff on display and get their voucher to get their premium like the other kids and that really excites them. I also started last year, a Cloverbud graduation ceremony, and that is for any of the kids who are moving on to the third grade and eight to the project, self project-driven program. We recognize them at fair on the final day. Bring them up on stage and give them a little graduation certificate. That’s what is coming to my head right now.

I: We are going to go ahead and look at the next question now. For the rest of the questions….

Q: What recruitment strategies you have used to create interest in your county Cloverbud program.

P3: We do a flyer that we send home through the schools for Kindergarten through fifth grade for both programs. But every child in Kindergarten, first, and second in ____ county, will get a flyer with information about what Cloverbuds is and that type of thing. This year, for some reason, it just really caught on and we got a lot of calls through that.

P5: In ____ county, we do flyers as well and place them in the schools and businesses and we do go into the school systems every February for our recruitment month. We try to hit the kindergarten, first, and second grades too. Then also, for the Cloverbud camping program, our teens also have to visit one or two 4-H clubs in the county, and they advertise the Cloverbud camp as well as the junior camp that we have in the county.

P6: In _____ county, we are doing very similar – we have done flyers through the schools, targeting kindergarten through second grade. Also trying to utilize the older kids in talking about the experiences, for the younger kids in the club, to maybe recruit younger siblings.

P1: In _____, we do the letters to the schools, but we also have an open 4-H day where kids come in. With Cloverbuds we do a lot of the activities and they have face painting and those kinds of things.

I: The next question: How are recruitment strategies different for parents vs youth….

P3: I get emails from parents wanting to know what the Cloverbud 4-H is all about and I think they are interested in the information about life skills and those kinds of things, as well as what we do at our club meetings. So they have a pretty good understanding about what the program is about. And sometimes if you have a parent who has children in the older program, or they were in 4-H, you really have to explain the difference between the two, because they have a preconceived notion of what Cloverbuds would be from their experiences.

P2: This is ____ in ______ county, and I so agree with you. I get a lot of phone calls and emails wanting to know what is available for our Cloverbuds, because they had their older 4-H members, siblings, that are in the program. They see all the fun activities they get to do, and if we don’t have things that we can hook these younger members into it, I’m afraid we are going to start loosing the Cloverbuds into the program because we are in competition with a lot of other things out there such as soccer camp, football camp, all these other sporting events that are out there. If we don’t start wheeling these younger members in to the program, we are going to start loosing them, so the more activities that we can have for these younger kids, to getting them hooked into the program, I know it’s three years or four years – depending on
their birthday until they get into the program. We need to make sure we just hook them, wheel them in, and get them in and keep them active.

29:31
P5: I think another frustrating part with the recruitment part, and I don’t know how you all are in your counties, not every single club in _____ county has Cloverbuds and of course, you all know when working with volunteers, some volunteers are exceptional with working with Cloverbud age youth, and other more, maybe some of the livestock clubs, I don’t want to say they don’t want to deal with them. They still treat the little Cloverbud members a little differently and I think they tend to want to mainstream them, and that is very challenging. I think, P2, you hit it, if we can’t get them engaged and involved in these activities, I have noticed in this county, if they can’t jump in and get hands on with some activities, especially the regular, more self individualized programs or projects, we loose them after about two years in Cloverbuds, if they are not in the right club. So I know, for me, for advertising and recruitment, I have to make sure that I get the Cloverbud members in the right club because I have some clubs that just don’t work well with Cloverbuds.
P2: Exactly.

30:27
P3: We have in _______County, I am trying to think, we have five clubs. And only two of those clubs are connected with community clubs. The rest of them stand alone. We have a little bit of a different view than the county that the majority of their clubs are attached to that community club, so that the advisors are focusing onto the Cloverbuds.
P5: I see. I have a couple of clubs like that in ______ County. It gets really challenging when they have older brothers and sisters that are taking the regular 4-H projects and they want to keep them in the same club too.
P6: Right.
P5: It seems to be a struggle down here.
P6: I think that a lot, P5. Here when I have a parent call, they contact me and they are like, I want to get my kids in 4-H, and they have some that are of project age and some that are Cloverbud age that I am limited in the clubs that I can send them to and they don’t want to go to two separate meetings.
P5: Right. And then it is project interest too, so that is kind of a battle.
P6: Yah, yah.
P6: And then when you were talking about your livestock club, you don’t think they do as good as Cloverbuds or whatever, do you actually require your advisor that is going to work with the Cloverbuds to be like at least one person named and do they have to do a separate training or anything like that?
P5: No, because to be honest, I have some clubs that, I don’t want to say that they prefer that they not be with them, um, I do have some clubs for sure that are not doing Cloverbud programming, where I have other ones that are doing great and I also have a third option that it is great at the beginning and then it gets bad. I have a lot of young advisors that start into the 4-H program because they have children that are Cloverbud age and they will take Cloverbuds for and couple of years and then when their kids get older and they don’t want to work with the Cloverbuds any more. So I also prefer, like P3 says she gets a lot of Emails, I prefer parents to Email me because then I know, kind of, this year, at this time, which is the best club to send Cloverbud members to. And then I also probably have about three clubs around the county that have constantly year after year offered Cloverbud programs with there regular project meetings for the eight year olds as well.
P6: Well I started when I first came to ______ County, it has been 12 years I can’t believe that, they had Cloverbuds and they had Cloverkids, and it was kind of like there own morph version of Cloverbuds. It really wasn’t following the state guidelines, and when I came out it was like, this is it. I am cleaning this up. And then I put in place each club that was going to offer Cloverbuds. You had to name a Cloverbud advisor, and state that that was their only responsibility. And then they had to not only, if they had already been to the volunteer process, come to my Cloverbud advisor training, or if they were brand new, they had to go through the whole process plus that. I think that it is one way that I have been able to have some control, or think I have some control over them actually utilizing some of the Cloverbud curriculum and somewhat doing a good job and really not having them be like mini 4-Hers being bored in the business meeting.
P5: Right.
P6: I have had those trainings and really stressed why we wouldn’t do that and those types of things.
P5: Did you have any clubs that did not want to go along with that policy?
P6: Oh yes, I had. I really, because like I said, when I came here, and I understood that maybe I have to go back and revisit the policy, see when I first came on, I understood that when you were going to have Cloverbuds, that you had to have a separate advisor that worked with them. I was understanding that it was kind of like a state policy and we had people here doing this thing called Cloverkids which our county had let them around the requirements, my predecessor. And I was like, “No we are 4-H and if we are going to do 5-8 year olds, we are going to follow the program guidelines for doing 5-8 year olds.” And so I had a lot of people that were upset at first, you know, “I don’t have an advisor that I can devote to that.” “Well then you shouldn’t have Cloverbuds. They need their own piece. And, so, for the first couple of years it was rough. I had a lot of people going through the training then. We had to get a big group trained, but, I have a lot of clubs that don’t have Cloverbuds. You know it is kind of like, I think different ones have said, community clubs have them, some don’t, and then I have, like I have one club that is just Cloverbuds. I think I have one.
I: Does anyone else have similar experiences or experiences working with Cloverbud parents?
P4: For the most part, with the exception of the separate programming I do, Cloverbuds are all contained within community clubs. And I have not had to go out and do any specific recruiting because of the situation I think you mentioned, P5, where as parents kind of age out of Cloverbuds, they recommend to us other parents. So I’ve got quite a turn over of Cloverbud advisors but it has always worked out very well. I have had, as I said, advisors recommending, or parents recommending that they be an advisor to another one, so I haven’t had to do any specific recruiting to get more advisors. I have always had a good supply of them by word of mouth, which as we all know, sometimes is a really good recruiting tool.
I: Anyone else have anything to share with us on this one?
PAUSE
OK. We will move on to the next question. Of the techniques that you have tried, describe the most successful recruitment strategies that you have used.
P2: In ______ County, well this is kind of for Cloverbud and for, 4-H members, we do an open house. I put flyers into all of our schools. It is very difficult within our school systems out here to even get any kind of flyers in. With the school system there is a lot of leg work involved, going to the superintendents, the principals, getting flyers within their schools. We do an open house. We have different activities. We have the 4-H project books. We have different clubs coming in to just talk, in whole, about what 4H is about, what they do within their clubs, service projects, activities that they do during their meetings and things. And this past year, it will be our third year of doing it, this past year has been a wonderful success, with all the folks that were there that day. I think I got pretty much all of them enrolled into our 4-H program, got everything into our computer. I will have to go back to our deadline and confirm everything, but through emails and phone calls, I pretty much got everybody enrolled in a program. There were quite a few Cloverbuds that were enrolled into the program too. So with our open house we were pretty pleased with all of that.
P3: Now where do you hold that open house?
P2: We hold it down at our fairgrounds in a big building that has heat and stuff. Another kind of getting them together, we have a club and they do an Easter egg hunt. Last year we did it in Feb, at the end of Feb., so we kind of do it a little bit early, but you know, it didn’t matter, the kids still had a fun time. They had little gifts in the little eggs, candy and whatnot, so they, it’s another thing they got to do that day too. We had blanket making things that the kids could do the tie knot blankets. They could either bring a friend with them that was kind of our selling point. They could bring a non 4-H friend with a 4-H member. You guys could sit and make a blanket and you can give it back to us and we will give it to a non profit organization, like, oh, nursing home or battered women’s shelter that kind of facility. We donated some of those back, or they could take it home as a reminder that, ‘Oh, I made this with the 4-H program. That was pretty cool.” You know, like it was a remember thing that they could take home with them. It makes them want to join the program.
P3: Is that during the week or a Saturday morning?
P2: Well, we did it Saturday morning, um, from 10-2 and we just had it from 10-2 and everyone was busy
from the moment at 10:00 until about 2:30. And we had no other way of advertising. We just did the
advertising through blanketing the school systems, just taking the little piece of flyer into the schools and
having them pass them out to the kids to take home. That was the only way of advertising that we did. No
newspaper, nothing else, so it was just the little flyer.
P5: _______ County did basically the same thing this year and it was called the 4-H Winter Fair on a Sat.
morning 10-2. And we did advertisements the very same way, except we did put it in our newsletter for the
4-H members and well as the newspaper and flyers. We probably had around 300 youth and adults coming
through a set up of like a huge sign. It was probably pretty similar to P2’s. They could do hands-on
projects making bags to take home, there was food, everything was free, there was information on
enrollment, there was a bookstore if they wanted to purchase 4-H books, and they could float around and
learn about as many of the different projects that we had kids in there that could provide information, so we
probably had 100 different projects, at least, that were offered where both the youth and parent could go
through and ask questions on how much it would cost to be in the Cloverbud program, what type of
activities you would do, you know, what you do at camp and fair and so on. And we were very very busy
and I would say that a lot of our new members this year attended the Winter Fair both Cloverbud and other
4H member ages.
P3: Did you have plenty of club space for those kids to be in?
P5: Yep. We were at the fair grounds and we used …
P3: No, I mean in the individual clubs.
P5: Oh, yes, somewhere to put them once you’ve recruited them.
P3: Yes, somewhere to put them once you recruit them.
P5: Yes, yes. I have probably two or three new clubs this year and two were also carrying Cloverbud new
members and looking to recruit new Cloverbud members, so that helped.
P3: That is one of our concerns as we are small that if we do something huge and have a large number of
kids, where are we going to put them?
P5: And I’m very, I guess I am a very strong believer in trying to match people by the area or school
system that they are in, so it kind of balances it way out too. We have a couple of clubs right in the central
area of [city] area that are probably a little top heavy, but I leave it up to them to decide if they need to
bring in a new set of volunteers and when they need to limit their numbers.
P1: _______ County does the same as you but our JVS lets us come in free to utilize their building.
All participants: Wow!
P1: Whether we do it in the winter or whenever. We are very blessed in _______ County. I had 177
Cloverbuds last year.
All participants: Wow, oh wow!
P4: Our county clubs just picked them up. Both of course when you have your four advisors you can have
this project and organizational activity in Cloverbud, it helps greatly, because somebody by word of mouth
is always coming back and starting a Cloverbud activity in an already made club. So we don’t have any
trouble putting people in clubs because it is a good program in our county that’s probably one of the
strongest youth programs we have.
P5: We do the same kind of thing in _______ County and we have a 4-H night and it sounds like the same
kind of thing. We have the activities going on for kids, and we have been real fortunate, as she said before,
word of mouth, having advisors, and the community clubs that have programs where we have a spot for
them.
I: Is there anything else or other strategies that you’ve used? …. What do you think would have caused
these activities to be so successful? The activities that you have described, it sounds like many of you have
success with open houses and things like that. What factors do you think have caused them to be so
successful?
P5: I think in _______ County, word of mouth and the general excitement of the current 4-H members
and current advisors in the county. I think that is the key to the success of ours. I don’t think it makes a
difference how much advertising. I really do. If I get their buy in on an activity like this, it makes it work.
I: Anyone else have a thought on what causes the activities to be so successful?
P4: I think somebody touched on this, I’m not sure who it was, I have parents who are just really looking
for things that kids at this age to do. Not only because their older siblings are participating in 4-H, but for
little guys, really young kids, there might be some soccer or after school things that are activities, but that’s not the activities for every kid. I went to a Cloverbud activity a couple of weeks ago, and the cleaning crew was in our building and she said, “How can I get information?” She said, “I really am struggling to find things for my little girl besides girl scouts.” I just think there is a real need for activities for young children that aren’t always sports oriented.

P3: I think the same thing. P4. I think a lot of the kids that we have are not into sports specifically, so parents are looking for something in other ways they can get their children involved to do particularly summer activities.

I: OK, as you know, many of the ideas that we try are unsuccessful. So our next question is going to be, what barriers might you run into while marketing Cloverbud programs?

P3: In _____ County, our only barrier would be having a place to put them, because of the small number of clubs that we have. So we hesitate to, to go to big on recruitment and then have to tell the parents that we don’t have any place to put their kids. I think that’s why we have so many in our countywide club. That’s one reason that we established a countywide club.

P6: I have a similar thing in _______ County just in that not all of my clubs have Cloverbuds and I run into the challenge that if you get someone in one end of the county that wants to join Cloverbuds, that don’t always have a club geographically close to them. That makes it kind of a challenge. The club that isn’t tied to the community club, they’re more on the western end of the county. So yeh, I would echo that issue.

P4: One of the issues that we have in _______ County in marketing programs is that the majority of the school districts, and we have nine school districts in ________, will not allow us to distribute flyers, because they get requests from all kinds of groups. So most of the districts have just said no, you can’t pass out flyers in our school or they will tell us we can bring one flyer to the entire school, so you know how successful that kind of thing is. The little ways, and this didn’t occur to me when we were talking about marketing, one of the ways that we have gotten around this, is that many of the schools do email announcements to parents and so then we can send them an email announcement and they can then put it on their distribution list, but as far as giving them copies of things to hand out to kids, we don’t do any of that any longer.

P2: Have you tried copying the paperwork or your flyers and say to the schools, “Can you please pass this out. You know we are providing the paper and the time, if you could just”

P4: Oh, absolutely! I’ve got two school districts, two of our largest, that say you can give us one piece of information per school. And they are willing to post it, but you know that doesn’t do any good.

P2: No, absolutely not.

P1: P4, in one of our city schools, they will let us bring it up there, the superintendent has to approve it, and they will announce and say that it is on the secretary’s desk.

P2: Yeh, there you go.

P3: P4, the schools that have their own website with the calendar of events of the school, will they let you put it on there?

P4: Um, No, I don’t think I have ever seen a calendar of events. I guess that is announcements. They will make it a part of their daily announcements or their parent newsletters that get emailed out. In a couple of schools where we have advisers who know someone, they will get it on sometime, but not as a rule. We have had very good luck, because there were so many parents who do give the information by email that I can tell when something has been announced, because I will get calls or I will get an email following that announcement.

P2: In _______ County I have not done this yet, because my schedule has never allowed me to be either at the right time or at the right place, but in some of the schools, they do like an open house prior to school to get things started. You know again we are just shortly getting done with our county fair, schools are starting again at the end of August, but they do like an open house and they have a whole bunch of different activities for kids to be able to do and to sign up and to get information and stuff. And the schools have been able to invite us in and set up maybe like a little display about 4-H, like a poster set up with flyers and family guides and things like that just to pass out to our kids and that school and stuff. I have had an advisor do that before and, you know, it was pretty successful to do that. So I don’t know if your guys’ schools do that or not, but you know we have been able to get into a couple of our schools with their open
house setting up a little table where they can get information and you know, take it, but again, it’s in August and by the time August to January comes back around, they kind of forget about it.

P4: August is better that May!

P2: Haha, exactly.

P3: We haven’t had for several years, but we have had organizations who would try to pull programs in for something like that. Programs that have summer things and it will be in May and that’s after the deadline and the clubs have been meeting, and you know, since January, and we just have to say, “Well you can’t join until next year.”

P2: Yes, right.

P3: We just don’t do any of those.

P6: The barrier has been that there is a cut off on the enrollment… is what you are saying is they missed it. That the time spring and summer come and they are thinking about looking for additional 4-H people, we have already kicked off the year.

P3: Right, and we have already been for or five months into clubs having meetings.

P6: I would challenge you to think about a plan, I don’t know, but I kind of have to stop and look at that too, because 4-H, we say you can join year round. You know that’s the 4-H policy. But counties can announce their own county cut of and I have already XXX that specifically to the fair.

P2: Right.

P6: And if you want to participate in judging and fair, you need to be in by April 15, for your county, but after that we will allow kids to join and we call them social member, and they can do camp and all that or whatever. They go to the fair board for that. I do have certain clubs that don’t want that after that time because it helps operate and I know not to funnel them there.

P2: Right.

P4: But I started revisiting that thought about Cloverbuds. A few years ago and I thought, you know, Cloverbuds are not in competition at the fair. You know that’s the big thing. So why do Cloverbuds have to make the enrollment deadline? You know, and I kind of started rethinking that, and I had some conversations with some Cloverbud advisors and some of my fair board members and we actually made our Cloverbud enrollment an open enrollment. Most of our people that are joining Cloverbuds, you know, are with the older sibling and are making the April 15 deadline, but I always have some that, like you said, they come along and like they come in May because they are looking for summer activities. And I’ve been able to identify some clubs that are like, “You send them my way and we will just, you know, put them right in with where we are now.” So my fair board even says, “Yeh, they’re not in competition.” You know as long as they are on board by the end of June or July, we’ll even allow them to get their, you know, discounted fair board and all that stuff. And that worked well as a solution to that piece. I had run into that very same thing a few years ago.

P1: We do the same thing. We have an open enrollment for our Cloverbuds.

I: Any other examples of barriers?

P5: I think a barrier for us down here, and now that, uh, it’s been around a little bit longer, the advisors haven’t had a lot of experience with working with it, or they weren’t in Cloverbuds, sometimes that seems to be a barrier. Even if you provide training resources and information, it seems like, as long as somebody in the club has some experience with the Cloverbud program, either as a member or they’ve helped with an advisor in another club, it is easier. But when they don’t have a lot of knowledge or experience it seems to be a barrier.

I: OK, tell us what ways you’ve tried to recruit for the Cloverbud programs but discontinued.

P6: I use to do it and I think, I don’t know P2 or someone talked about it and it made me think of this when you were talking about recruiting and I didn’t discontinue it on purpose. I just discontinued it because it kind of quit happening. I use to have a couple of elementary schools that they had some, and I don’t even remember what it was for, but they had nights where they had parent meetings and were required to come in. I think you could probably do this at parent teacher conferences. And one of the school teachers knew what we did, and she contacted us at the time and she asked if we would come in and provide some hands on activities with the kids to do while the parents were busy, meeting with teachers or whatever. And so
we went into the school and I think I took some of the fishy science stuff and some goldfish and some of those experiments and would sit in the room and have the kids do those things, and then we would give them a 4-H flyer and talk about 4-H and the couple of times that I did that I had like second or third graders and talked about Cloverbuds. Now I haven’t done that for a while just because I haven’t. I don’t know, the school quit doing that. It just kind of fell through. We have other events.

I: So the program was successful when you were doing it, or?
P6: Yes, it was successful in that a couple of things. One I found something that really got people, I would talk about 4H while they were there. Like, you know it’s not just for farm kids …bla,bla,bla,bla,bla. I really was able to kind of I think get some impact on changing the image. Now the actual numbers that came out and joined 4-H, I never did check that. I wouldn’t say that they were huge. Maybe like 10-20%. I guess it depends on how your measuring was it successful: were they joining it, were they more educated about 4-H and what we are, that kind of thing.

I: Does anyone else have an experience that they have attempted an activity or program?

PAUSE

Well, I guess my next question had to do with the first one actually. It was just describing the reasons that the activities might not have been success, so in P6’s case…
P6: I think the need kind of lasted, like at the time and my connection. One of the teachers knew what we did and they had some activities and they needed someone who could do that and then I think she probably moved on and I think the school kind of changed their format.

57:13

I: Would anyone like to input here?

PAUSE

OK, well we will move onto the next section:
Many people have different concepts about 4H, some have never heard of the Cloverbud program. So we would like to find out, what point we try to address when speaking about the Cloverbud program, and I know some of you started to lead into this earlier. So, what messages do you try to send out about the Cloverbud program?
P3: We try to emphasize the life skills that we think we should be working on with the Cloverbud program. If you have parents who never been connected with 4-H, it is much easier because they don’t have the notion about doing the project. But when we have parents who have kids now who are coming in and they know what 4-H is all about, we still try to emphasize that the children this age need to do things that are age appropriate and that the Cloverbud program is doing that and that it is researched based.
P4: I have to make it clear with the traditional audience that there is a real 4-H.

All participants: Uh huh.
P6: You know it is like they, yeh, that whole thing when you hit third grade and you get to take a project, a self directed project, there tended to be a conception here that, well they are not really a 4-H member until they can take a project. And so, you know, you really work hard to say, you know, you say, “No, it is all 4-H.” It is all youth development programming just doing it in different ways and down different avenues that are age appropriate, and those Cloverbud years count towards total 4-H years for ten year members and all that stuff. So that is how I tried to clear up that message.
P4: Along with that we also stress the fact it is not a competitive program. The kids are making something and it is going to go in the booth, the fair booth, the Cloverbud booth. They’re not competing for ribbons or prizes and are very much age appropriate developmental activities.
I: Could you give any examples of how you emphasize that it is age appropriate?
P4: Here is something. When I have a Cloverbud advisor training, that is one of the things we go over.
I: OK, what messages are the most successful with youth or children when marketing these programs at open houses or anything like that, that you use to promote your program?
P3: I think that just the idea that we do activities. Um, we have had members who have gone on into the project club and particularly those who are just starting that the project area will want to go back to Cloverbuds because of all the activities and the envolvment that the Cloverbuds do. That is one thing that really attacks them, that age, is doing things.

I: Has anyone else noticed the activities, similar experience, that activities have drawn in with youth or
children?
P6: Cloverbud daycamp. That activity has been a draw for us. Just talking, “you get to go to camp.” “Oh! I get to go to camp!” That has been a real big draw with youth, and we even make our Cloverbud daycamp kind of an open thing, and I encourage the Cloverbuds to bring a non-4-H friend. And a lot of times, having them come to that daycamp, we have been really good at getting them enrolled in Cloverbuds then that next year in a club.
P1: We do a day camp also, but we also have a Cloverbud overnight camp and ___ 4-H camp. And we are up to two of those now because we have so many parents. We have a parent come with the children and they get to experience all of the things at camp without their parent not being with them. And that has really helped.
P6: So wait. You said that the parents come and spend the night with them or they don’t?
P1: They do. The parents spend the night and we do all the things at camp there that you would do when you are starting in third grade.
P6: I can remember doing that with my brother when he was a Cloverbud and my parents went. I would like to do that here, but it is kind of an obstacle when your camp is on an island. It makes it really, really expensive.
P4: We’ve talked about doing that here too, but with camp ____ , we can’t because the camp is always booked all summer. I think that is a great thing to be able to offer to kids.
P3: ___ does an overnight. They do a 24 hr experience. 4:00 on Sunday afternoon to 4 on Monday. We don’t require a parent to come with each child, but we do have adults and teen counselors who are in the cabins and they are in groups of about 6. It has worked fairly well with the kids who don’t have a parent there. Most of the adults who come are parents of children who are coming.
P4: Can I ask how much you charge for your overnights?
P1: Ours is $30 and it includes 1 parent and 1 child, and if they have another child who is coming who is Cloverbud age, it is $10 extra.
P3: I haven’t been involved in the ___ one for a couple years because it overlaps our day camp. I think it was $50 and that included t-shirts, all of the supplies, meals, and snacks, that type of thing.
P6: Safety wise, those parents who are coming in overnight, how do you screen them? For the 2 or 3 counties that have them overnight.
P3: I am not involved with that. I know they fill out an application.
P6: OK, so the parent who actually comes with their child has to fill out an application too?
P3: Yes. Those and the teens too that come have to fill out an application like you would have with your other camps. And then they do have a training session.
P6: OK.
P3: I don’t know about any kind of background checks or that kind of thing.
P6: If I am a parent and I am bringing my kid to camp, do you want to screen me because I am around other youth, or are you talking about the parents who are coming to be with the kids who don’t have parents coming.
P3: I am talking about the parents who come as volunteer counselors.
P6: They spend the night in the cabin with the kids?
P3: Yes.
P6: OK. That would be my question. Because obviously it’s not the parents that drop their kids off, but those that are coming, maybe with their child, spending the night in the cabin with other children too. I can see that being a safety concern.
P1: Well ours is …
P6: But if every kid is required a parent do you do that?
P1: No. They just fill out the normal application so that we know they are coming, so they are registered. Now we will have parents bring other children, but they are known to the family members. It is not like a child that wouldn’t know who she was going to be with or he was going to be with.
P6: So in a typical cabin at Cloverbud overnight camp, you might have 6 kids and 4 adults?
P1: Yea.
P6: In a cabin.
P1: And we have to make sure if it’s boys and boys, they are on one end of the cabin. If it’s girls… Now I have put girls and boys together if it’s the same family in a room.
P3: With our numbers, we have had approximately 6 youth in a cabin, and then we would have at least one adult and 2 teen counselors with those 6.
I: Ok. Let’s move on. The next question that kind of follows along with the first message question… parents…

P3: Interestingly enough, I have had parents who want to know if the kids are going to be active or just sitting. In our countywide club, we try to do an active thing, a craft type thing, and then the kids make their own snack and we try to put nutrition in with it. So we have tried to incorporate into every meeting, some sort of physical activity. And for some parents, that has been a very important thing.
I: Has anyone else had a similar experience?
P1: For a lot of parents, it is public speaking. When we come to the fair they do an interview, and they have done their project or their little activity and they have brought it with them. And a lot of kids from the previous year to the next one, they have started to talk to the judges or the people interviewing them.
P2: I always tell my parents when I talk to them about the Cloverbud program, it is getting their feet wet to join the program and getting to know what kind of projects there are. So it gives them a chance to see and shadow some older kids within their 4-H club. And then it also gives them a chance to see how judging works and they get more comfortable talking with an adult, so by the time they are ready to take that project up to the judge, they are not gun-shy. They are ready to go up there and tell them everything that they are ready to learn and what they have learned to do and everything. So I think it makes them more comfortable by the time they are ready to go for judging.
P3: I think some parents, too, are interested in, as you say, you are teaching them life skills. Even if you’re aimed to being comfortable with the person that they are going to talk with about their project. And I think the parents see those life skills, social skills, as something important that this program will provide those kinds of experiences in a safe place for their kids.

I: Anything else?

Alright, as we have talked today about the marketing of…. What is the most important thing…?
P3: If you look at is from having a member continue to come, I think one of the most important things is making each child comfortable, feels important, and that you draw them into the group and the activities, that they are successful, and that they want to come back. Those that don’t feel that, tend to not come back.
P2: Plus if you see your numbers going up in each year, obviously you know you are doing something good. The other Cloverbuds are telling the other little ones, of their friends, “hey, you need to be joining this program, this is really fun, this is what I’ve done.” The more things and activities that we have for the little ones, that they can invite a non-4-H member, too, that is just going to help the non 4-H member say, “you know what mom, I think I want to do this next year.” So I say, as our numbers are growing, I think that shows the success right there.

I: Anything else that you would name one of the most important things to the success of a program?
P4: I think one of the things that helps our advisors is having lots of resources for them to use. Since so many of my advisors are parents of young children, a lot of times they are lost with what they do with a whole group of kids. Certainly different than just having a friend or two over for a play day. So I think having a lot of resources, you know. Having the curriculum, I have some extra Cloverbud kits that I have created to give them lots of ideas. So training, more activities, and places they could go to look for things to do during their club meetings, so it has some structure to it and it’s not just play time for 5 minutes or an hour while the older kids have their 4-H meeting.
P2: I agree with that comment. I think that the more stuff we can have available for our advisors that is either easy for them to pick up or to have on our county website for them to do that they can just pull off quickly. A lot of our volunteers, they do give a lot of time within our program. A majority of them work full time and they have their children that they are trying to raise. So the more things that we can be able to provide for them to make it easy for them to either print something off or come into the office and pick up a kit, that is going to be more successful that they don’t have to spend too much time on the research and the
hunt and the dig for those things before their meeting today at 4:00 or whatever.
I: Does anyone else agree with that statement?
P6: I would because I think that is part of the reason why I require my advisors to come to training so they
aren’t going, “Oh, what am I going to do with these kids every meeting?” And I try to explain the
Cloverbud curriculum. It’s all right here – it has a theme, tell s you how long, what activities you need. But
we brainstorm how to compile resources as a club, here I’ve got all of these kits. The easier we can make it
on those people doing that, the more resources we can give them to just grab and go.
I: What are some other things about Cloverbuds that you thought we were going to discuss today and have
not, or something that we’ve missed?
P1: You put the curriculum into perspective, what Cloverbud activities are, it also helps just being on the
call to hear what other people are doing, so we have encouragement and other ways of thinking to go on
with the program.
P3: I was just thinking that too, P1, and Libby, will we get a summary of the responses when you get done?
Will that be available?
I’ve been writing down some things that I’ve heard…
Always a good idea to share ideas…

P4: I would agree. It always helps anytime you get together with one another to share ideas. And one of the
other things
If on the Ohio 4-H website, the Cloverbud section wasn’t a static site, you know if there were message
boards, if there was a way that people could post information and get to do just what we are doing now, but
to do it via the internet when resources are more and more limited. That could be updated on a regular
basis. I know we have talked about that – we being 4-H in general – to have that capability on the website,
but I think that would be such a valuable tool for us and advisors.
P3: We are working on that P4.
P4: Thank you P3.
P3: We are very slowly working on that, we have good outlines, we have been talking to some advisors and
parents, and 4-H professionals to be able to go to to pick up information. It hasn’t been launched yet. We
are to the point where we are needing to get some pictures too before we can get the pages actually ready to
go. Hopefully it will come about.
P2: Do the final report with all three focus groups?

**Focus Group #2 Transcription**

I: Thank you & directions– script
I: To start off with so that we can get your voices on the recorder, say your name and the county
I: The first question I am going to ask differently than the remainder of the questions in that I will ask all of
you to respond…
Q1: Please share how you have been involved with the 4-H Cloverbud program.
P1: I recently came to Extension in September 2007, so when I came to the program our 4-H year was
pretty much over with. My involvement with 4-H Cloverbud program started in May 2008 with our
enrollment, and I haven’t done a whole lot with our Cloverbud program other than the members at the
Cloverbud camps and then the activities that we do throughout the year.
I: Okay. P2.

P2: I work with Cloverbuds through our school programs, and we also have a cloverbud day camp. We
have a Cloverbud booth at the fair. We also offer some Cloverbud fun time activities. We have Cloverbud
graduation. I think that’s pretty much it.
I: Okay. P3.
P3: I have been giving leadership to the Cloverbud program in the county since before it became a
mandated program. We did it as an optional program before the state went and added it completely. I pretty
much conduct from volunteer training all the way through the program anything with Cloverbud day camp
at the end of the year. I pretty much do it all with our Cloverbud program here in the county.
P4: Okay here in ________, if there is a new volunteer who wants to work with Cloverbud training, we interview them with the other volunteers. Then I work with our Cloverbud representative on 4-H committee and some other Cloverbud leaders to organize in a committee, and I conduct a new Cloverbud advisor mandatory meeting and team teach with them that evening. If there are some Cloverbud leaders who are new and could not make that first mandatory meeting, I do the make-up in a condensed form here at the Extension office for them. And then we also have a different committee that plans our day camp for Cloverbuds, and I work with that committee to plan sessions and get resource people and plan the day at our park, and then go that day and help the camp, and the evaluation we send out later, after the camp – and summarize that evaluation. Regarding our booths at the fair, I update the letter with the Cloverbud representative and send out to all of the Cloverbud leaders, but I work with our rep to set up the booth. I would say that is about what I do with the Cloverbud program.

I: Our next question will be about some of the recruitment strategies used in the past with 4-H Cloverbuds. And again, with the rest of these questions, I am not going to point out people in a specific order that you have to answer the questions in. If you hear something that sparks your interest or memory, or whatever just go ahead and discuss whenever you want.

Q2: What recruitment strategies have you used to create interest in your county Cloverbud program?

P1: I’ll start. One of the things we do is at our county fair, and to try to encourage youth to participate. It’s called “kids day,” and it goes over three of four days during the fair, and we encourage the younger kids to come out and do different contests and when they are there, we try to recruit them into our program.

P4: We recruit at our “Spotlight on 4-H.” It’s an annual spring event, and we have a Cloverbud station there, and they make an activity. And so all the young people enjoy making a craft or an item while hearing about Cloverbuds. So that is a good way to interest them in the program. During our county 4-H week, we usually have a Cloverbud leader on the radio program when we have volunteers on the talk show. So that makes an awareness of the program also. As far as for Cloverbud camp, we send out flyers, publicize it in our newsletter, and talk about it on the radio program as we would with our other camps.

I: Could you describe your “Spotlight on 4-H” a little bit further?

P4: It’s an activity that we have at the fairgrounds. It’s about 3 hours. As they come in, this year we did a scavenger hunt, and there’s different, you might say, tables or booths in this building, and at each booth they have to find an answer to the scavenger hunt, which might be ages for 4-H or Cloverbud camp, those types of things. But we have different types of projects and activity areas represented at the Spotlight on 4-H. As well as, we have a shooting range set up where kids can become a little more familiar with the shooting sports. And when they finished the scavenger hunt, they all got a 4-H item that they could select, like a carabineer with a compass or a lanyard, or a 4-H water bottle, or something for completing the scavenger hunt activity.

I: Does anyone else have an activity that would be similar or completely different for Cloverbud recruitment?

P3: We recruit pretty much strictly through the schools. Sending out flyers to the schools, just like we do with our older 4-H members. And we reach the kids through the schools and word of mouth.

P4: One other thing I happen to think of is when we put bookmarks in the libraries during 4-H week, we also mention Cloverbuds and those ages on the bookmarks.

P1: 4-H week is a really big thing for us. This year we did an ice cream social for 4-H week, which brought in a lot of recruitment for Cloverbuds. We basically serve ice cream at the event and gave out information, and played games at the event as well. We also do library displays and displays in local businesses to try to encourage involvement.

I: Could you describe your displays a little bit?

P1: Our clubs do our displays. If they don’t have the resources, they come into the office and get handouts on Cloverbuds and even 4-H membership. And they usually put flags as well as 4-H memorabilia, and then they put contact information for either their group or the 4-H program.

I: This goes along the same lines:

Q3: How are your recruitment strategies different for parents verses youth?

P4: I just think when you talk to parents, you need to talk to them about the basics such as ages, what the children will be learning, that they are learning life skills, to cooperate, and finish what they started. Whereas when you are talking to the youth, like when you talk about Cloverbud camp, you will talk about
the fun session that they will do, that they meet other people their age, and some of the activities that they will do.
I: Would anyone else like to comment? P2:
P2: I think with the parents, at least with my experience, it’s either been by word of mouth or some of the flyers that we’ve had a local schools or libraries. That’s how we get parents interested, and so they call in and we steer them to one of our local clubs.
P1: I also provide our parents when they call with a parent packet. We have several different things that we put together, and I think most of it has been gathered from the state like our new family orientation and that sort of thing, so they understand our program better and know what resources we have to offer them.
I: Anyone else have similar ideas or differing ideas?

Q4: Alright, well of the techniques that you have tried, describe the most successful recruitment strategies.
P3: I think the most successful for us is that the Cloverbud program works well with existing kids. Younger siblings. Once you get those kids in, they bring in the younger siblings and then they bring their friends. I think that has been the most successful for us in the fact that that is an outlet for those younger siblings that are coming to 4-H meetings anyway.
P4: They start to feel like they have a purpose for coming to the meetings too, they are not just tagging along. And I really try to emphasize that Cloverbuds and project members are all equal 4-Hers and they are both gaining years of 4-H experience towards year pins and things. They are not just “pre-4-H.” Sometimes you hear people say, “Well when they get old enough to be in regular 4-H.” Well really they mean project 4-H because they are really full fledged 4-H members.
P5 Joins 21:48
I: (Current question)
P1: Yeah, I have one more comment. I think with our county, the publicity that we give like the newspaper articles, or again the displays or the things that we have going on with the county has been very successful with our Cloverbud program and the recruitment for that.
I: Would you explain further the newspaper articles and things of that nature.
P1: Yeah, I have a bi-weekly newspaper article that I always write for 4-H. And come time for enrollment or events, I always advertise those, and a lot of our events we open up to the public as well so then that encourages the youth to come. Then, once again, we can recruit from there. And when I go to these things, or advertise for these things, I always put my information, and where they can go to reference Cloverbuds or 4-H.
I: What are some of the other techniques that you’ve tried that you’ve found to be very successful?
P4: Well this is just an additional one that hasn’t been mentioned. It’s hard to know how successful it is. We also list Cloverbuds on our website, so people going there can click on Cloverbuds and see the requirements and some of the activities involved.
P5: Not knowing what has been mentioned already, but I guess our biggest thing here is brochures to the schools that go home to parents that include the club information in them and how to contact the clubs and that kind of stuff. I guess here, that’s the most successful thing we do, probably. That and word of mouth from younger siblings and that kind of stuff.
P2: Word of mouth is definitely our most successful one, but we also have our clubs listed on our website with their different subject areas, and so the Cloverbuds would be on there as well. So they have a contact number of an advisor so they can know what clubs are in their area to contact with the ones who have Cloverbuds within their clubs.
I: P5, would you mind giving a little more detail on the brochures you were talking about?
P5: We’ve revised it for this past year. It’s a general 4-H brochure that talks a little bit about everything. There is a section specifically for Cloverbuds, but then within it, we list all of our clubs with what their specialty is or what their focus is and how to contact their organizational advisor.
I: Any other comments on the most successful recruitment strategies?
I: What do you think caused the activities to be so successful? What factors might have the most influence in these areas, causing them to be so successful?
P4: When you are talking about people’s children, the word of mouth is important, talking about how Cloverbuds is an important program. People will get involved when it benefits their children, and give their
time when it is going to impact their own family. Whether it is a booth, a flyer, or word of mouth, they do it for their children. When you can say how much it benefits their children in the long run, I think that they can tell it’s important to give their time and money.

I: Okay. As you know many ideas we try are unsuccessful. So our next question is:

Q?: What barriers have you run into while marketing Cloverbud programs?

P1: One of our barriers is actually getting into the schools. I know some of you have mentioned that was your best way of promoting the program. In ____ county, sometimes it’s even difficult just to get into the schools to give out promotional information on the program. So that’s one of our barriers.

P5: We’ve had that problem in ____ county. So it’s not so much us going into the schools anymore, as us just providing the schools with brochures to send home. They’re willing to hand them out for us, they just don’t want us to take up time during their day.

P1: We even have the barrier where they are not necessarily passing out the information for us.

P5: Yeah.

P4: I think one barrier is that people have the notion that 4-H is a project and it’s livestock.

P5: Yeah

P4: And you have to explain that it’s very beneficial to them at this young age, and they are not really ready for competition in livestock, and how this gets them to cooperate and share, and have fun with other kids, and develop some life skills prior to project work.

P5: I agree with P4 on that, and I don’t know maybe how much the barrier is, but we hear that complaint a lot. Especially when I have a kid that doesn’t quite meet the age and grade requirement – maybe meets one but not the other. They don’t understand why they can’t move up to regular 4-H and take a livestock project. That’s usually the request we are getting, but it is a matter of explaining the benefits, like P4 said.

P4: P5, I also tell them that our challenge really in 4-H is to make the project work as fun and as hands on as the Cloverbud experiences. We have heard a couple parents say that when their child moves from Cloverbuds to project work, it’s a change, and it’s not as fun, the business meetings are boring. And so, I tell advisors that really our challenge is to make it as fun and exciting as the Cloverbuds, so they can transition better.

P5: yeah.

I: P3, have you run into any barriers while marketing your program?

P3: No, not really. We have a good relationship with the schools and we get in there. Probably our biggest barrier, and that’s not really marketing them, is having enough volunteers in the clubs that are willing to give time to the program outside of the business meeting. And just having that special Cloverbud time within the club setting, but that’s really the only barrier that we have to some of the kids having the best Cloverbud program that they can and the best Cloverbud experience.

I: P2, do you have any experience with any of these issues?

P2: No, not really.

I: Okay, well the next question, kind of on the same page is,

Q?: Tell us about ways you have tried to recruit for the Cloverbud program but have discontinued for one reason or another.

I: I know some of you were leading into this with some of your previous discussion about maybe you used to be in the schools or something like that. Anything.

P4: Can you repeat the question again, please?

I: Yes, the question is, ...

P1: Well I said we couldn’t get into the schools, but we haven’t discontinued that at this point. We still try to reach the schools and get in there and promote the program.

P5: I would say the same thing in ____ county. Even if we can’t get in, we have still made the effort to get them the information.

I: Any other comments about something you’ve tried but hasn’t worked?

I: My next question, to go along with that questions was actually,

Q?: Describe the reasons why these attempts were not successful, or what factors caused them to be unsuccessful. So if any of you have comments on that, you can go ahead and give comments.
I: Okay, well we will move on. Many people have different ideas or concepts about 4-H, and some people have never even heard of the 4-H Cloverbud program. We would like to find out what point you try to address when speaking about the Cloverbud program.

Q? What messages .....  
P4: I think the biggest thing we try to emphasize is that it’s activity based and it’s non-competitive.  
P2: They have immediate success in having completed their activities right there in the meeting.  
P5: I would say some of those same things, in the fact that it’s an opportunity for younger kids to get involved in something and maybe get their feet wet with the 4-H experience.  
P4: Any addition is that the curriculum is excellent. Not only for Cloverbuds, but a lot of other youth organizations use it for their activities. It is developed through the university and volunteers don’t have to do a lot of preparation. I mean they just follow the lesson plan. So I think those materials are a great resource for them – for the leaders.  
P2: They get an opportunity to explore a variety of subject areas too. Sometimes with our older members they do specialize in a particular subject or project area, but with Cloverbuds, they can explore a variety of areas.  
P1: We also try to express in our program, that the Cloverbuds aren’t separate from the other members. They are just as important as the others and they need to be incorporated into what’s going on. So let’s say in a club meeting, try to incorporate them, maybe make a special office for the Cloverbuds, so on and so forth.  
I: Is there anything else that we could say more about? The messages that you try to send out?  
I: Okay, well the next question is kind of along the same line,  
Q?: What messages are most successful to youth? So if you are thinking about marketing to the child, what messages are the most successful?  
P4: I think that they like to know that they are fun activities, and that they can go to the 4-H meeting just like their brother and sister.  
P3: That we have a day camp for them.  
P5: I think I would say some of those same things as P4, I think the big thing is that they get to go to the 4-H meetings with the older kids and they can still participate in some of those activities if they are doing a field trip or a service project or something they can still all work together and still do something with their older brothers and sisters or whatever.  
I: Okay. And on the other hand, what messages do you see as the most successful with parents?  
P5: I would like to say it’s some of those things we talked about earlier: being activity based and non-competitive and so educational. Sometimes it’s the parents more than the kids that don’t understand why they can’t take a project and show at the fair. It’s a harder point to get across to them sometimes depending on the parent.  
P4: Sometimes when you explain to the parents that they are not really ready for winning and loosing, it’s too upsetting. They will say, “yeah, I can see that,” so they will agree that they are going to learn a lot still through the Cloverbud activities.  
P1: I also think the program offers a social aspect for the parents as well to get their kids involved with more than just school, but activities where they can be involved socially.  
I: Does anyone else have similar experiences with working with parents? Recruiting or marketing to the parents...  
P1: P2, have you worked much with parents, trying to get them to buy in to the program?  
P2: When they call in, if they are not familiar with the Cloverbud program, then I go into the different subject areas, letting them know that there are a number of different things that they can learn about as Cloverbud members. So that’s mostly been my experience with parents – when they initially call in and they are looking for a club.  
I: Okay, so ...  
Q?: What is the most important thing...  
P1: I think that volunteers are one of the most important things. Having them well trained and knowing how to incorporate the Cloverbuds into a well rounded program.  
P4: Yes, I think that’s the key, that the volunteers be organized and that they really care about the kids. If
they are organized and they care, then they will follow through with the details and offer fun activities and communicate with the parents. So the volunteer is key.

I: What else could we say about the success of a program?

P5: Maybe aside from the volunteers it is what activities they choose to do with the kids. I guess I’m just thinking here, I have a wide range of the Cloverbud groups that are larger and more successful. The ones that are more successful seem to be the ones that utilize the Cloverbud curriculum and the Cloverbud kits that we have to check out, and try to offer a variety of things and keep it interesting. We have a couple that don’t always know what to do with them or give them a variety to choose from, and they don’t seem to be as successful.

P1: I also think it’s important as OSU employees and staff to let the volunteers and coordinators know what is out there so they can incorporate it. Sometimes we don’t do our job to making sure all the information is given to those who need to incorporate it.

I: What else can be said for the success of the program?

Another thing we were going to ask is,

Q?: What are other things about Cloverbuds that you thought we were going to discuss today, but did not? Or something that we’ve missed and you’d like to share about the Cloverbud program?

P4: One thing our volunteers always ask about and we explain is, “can we do things that aren’t in the curriculum?” So we go over the 10 guidelines or parameters about that it is safe and age appropriate, non-competitive and so forth that Scott Scheer has put out. So we tell them to check the activity against them and if it meets all those criteria, then they are good to go.

P1: I’ve heard us talk about youth or parents not wanting to participate because they cannot take a project to the fair or can’t take a project throughout the year, and in ___ county, we really try to incorporate the Cloverbuds into our overall program. Like we will bring them into our other offerings. For the public speaking contest, we offer the Cloverbuds to come in to do the pledge and we have their own little competition for them.

We have a judging at the fair for them. They make a poster display or whatever they would like to do so that then they feel like they are coming to the fair and presenting something and then they get awarded for what they come and do. Then we also have other events at the fair for them throughout the year that make them feel welcome and involved in the program – not just because they are not taking that project area.

I: Does anyone else have a

P4: At the ___ fair, we have non-competitive classes for the younger kids in many of the livestock shows, just called small fry showmanship, pre 4-H, no not pre-4-H, but they have different names. They present their animals and they all get the same ribbon or the same little trophy, or they could get a coupon to the ice cream stand. So they all get the same award in the end. But they all are eligible to go out there and show a smaller animal. Sometimes parents can accompany them.

I: What other experiences have you had that you can share that might be helpful to other people throughout the state? Anything we missed?

P3: I know one thing we briefly mentioned was the idea of a day camp, which I think most of us that have Cloverbud programs do. But what we do in _____ county with our day camp is we have our camp at one location every year. We used to go to ____ to our 4-H camp site, so the kids kind of got a feel for that, so when they came as first year campers they will have a familiarity with the facility. But, in a day camp setting, that didn’t seem to work as well because parents had to commute farther. So we brought it back just in our county and I have a rotation around our county a different locations every three years, so those Cloverbuds never have the same camp experience, a different Cloverbud camp every three years. So if we have three different settings ____ state park, a historical farm, and downtown with the city pool and the fire station, they can walk and hike through the town. So it’s a different setting, a different atmosphere, and they get three different experiences throughout their Cloverbud experience.

P4: just a side note on Cloverbud day camp, we do songs after lunch, and some of the songs we sing at our Junior camp like Herman the worm, and songs that are really fun. So then, when they go to camp, they already know some of the songs.

I: Anything else that we have failed to mention?

P4: At our Cloverbud leader meeting, something just to share is, we have a sharing table and we ask some
of the experienced leaders if they want to come they can share some of the activities or items that they have made with the Cloverbuds, and they like sharing with the new Cloverbud leaders.
I: Can we say anymore about this?
Okay, well as we explained in the beginning of this focus group… Have we missed anything?
P2: Was there anything different in the first group?
I: Yes…. 55:55

Focus Group 3 Transcription
1:53

My name is Libby…

State your name and the county where you work:

I: First question I will ask differently… go in same order…
Please share how you have been involved in 4-H Cloverbud program.
P1: I guess where I am involved is that I work with the volunteers as they come in. They watch the video, I go over that aspect with them, answer any questions they may have, and then I just provide as much guidance as I can to the Cloverbud advisors.
P2: I’ve done several different things: we start at the schools with recruitment brochures going out to the kindergartners and first graders, and when those come back in we look up the clubs etc. and if there aren’t enough, I will call parents of those kids and recruit some more volunteers. I also work with the potential volunteers that the clubs bring in – the current clubs. We do an initial training with all the volunteers and then every three years, I ask all of the Cloverbud volunteers to come in again, and those that have functioned for a while share their favorite activities and that kind of thing. And then I also do a Cloverbud day camp kind of thing and a Cloverbud sharing thing at fair time where the kids come in and share some of the things they learned at Cloverbud day camp.

7:53

P3: Ok, we also do Cloverbud recruitment through the schools. We usually go in and visit the Kindergarten classrooms, and when we do that we usually take some 4-H teens, and we do a program called, “reading makes the best better.” And then, from that the members that are interested are directly enrolled in 4-H clubs and that is done by them contacting a club to enroll. And I also work with new volunteers that are interested in starting new Cloverbud clubs, and do the screening and training and whatever it is that they need to get their club up and going. I also conduct a one day Cloverbud day camp during the summer. And another piece that we do with the Cloverbuds is that we do a Cloverbud show and tell at our county fair. We also have an exhibit booth for them to put their displays in during the county fair.

P4: We do normal recruiting for our Cloverbuds along with our project 4-H members. The Cloverbuds, we don’t have any stand alone Cloverbud clubs currently, they are all units or part of a larger 4-H club. We do our normal recruiting, school flyers, school talks, things like that, a lot of younger siblings type things help joining Cloverbuds. We have had some afterschool Cloverbud clubs, but this year we currently don’t. I do some Cloverbud age-appropriate programming for after school programming. So, we pick up kids like that, along with (something), we do some egg embryology in some of the Kindergarten classes too, we get kids interested and do that basic life skill stuff. For Cloverbud programs, we have a Cloverbud show and tell. We do a pre-fair judging week, that’s the part of that, and then during the week of the fair, we do a “Clover Clues.” It was a brand-new program last year where the kids scavenger hunt, anybody Cloverbud age and a Jr. Fair member. So, Cloverbuds or younger boy scouts or cub scouts, or girl scouts, brownies. They get to participate in that Clover Clues activity which is a massive scavenger hunt all over the fairgrounds. And then we also do a Cloverbud day camp – a one day program, and last year we also put in a Cloverbud graduation.
P5: We just do Cloverbud recruiting as part of our regular recruitment. We got our first stand-alone Cloverbud club this year, and the lady wanted to keep it small, so she has six members and that is all she wanted. We just make it part of our regular recruitment, and if a club will specifically say they want to
grow their Cloverbud program, we will work in those goals. As far as Cloverbud programming, we do 4 Cloverbud camps a year. The biggest attended one is the first day of the county fair. We do one as part of 4-H camp and then we do stand-alones in the fall and winter that we just have a couple three hour programs at a local community college. We also have a day that is a public speaking event we call “contest day” and we do special Cloverbud activities at that. And one of the main things that our Cloverbuds like that for is because at our county fair we have a Cloverbud display that they can plant flowers in old boots or shoes and display those as part of that department at the fairgrounds. And so they plant their shoe or boot at that contest day thing in June. So, a lot of kids come to that, but it is mostly just to get ready for the fair. That’s about it.

P6: We run our similar to P4 in that we run our s as a part of an existing club, we don’t have any stand alone Cloverbud clubs. I work with the Cloverbuds as far as volunteer training, along those lines, and helping the volunteers to get the resources they need for Cloverbuds. Then we do a one-day Cloverbud day camp in the summer like many of the counties do. And at our fair we also do, it’s optional for the Cloverbuds to do the show and tell where they sit down with someone to talk about what they did and then they can exhibit anything they made from one of the activities that they did at the fair in a booth for the Cloverbuds. So, very similar to a lot of the other counties, but we don’t do the stand alone Cloverbud project, or club.

P7: Our is much the same as the other counties right now, I don’t have any stand alone Cloverbud clubs right now. I have had in the past. I work with, our recruitment is done much the same as the others in that we recruit when we recruit for our traditional project-based clubs. I work with members and I work with volunteers in training them. And we also have a Cloverbud day camp at our fair, we have a fair review, where the Cloverbuds model something that they’ve made or carry something that they’ve made. And that’s kind of our show and tell, only we don’t have the tell part they just show and walk down the runway. New this year, we are going to have a Cloverbud fun day at the fair where we have some activities for Cloverbud age children, and that will also serve as a recruitment, promotional tool for us as well. And then our Cloverbuds do display in a booth at the fair.

P8: We have kind of the same; we do have a couple Cloverbud stand alone clubs. I have a couple of those that are after school clubs that are just Cloverbuds. We also have the Cloverbud show and tell during the fair and the Clover Clues scavenger hunt, and we also do a Cloverbud graduation during our fair. We do the Clover Clues as kind of a recruitment thing and invite kids that are Cloverbud age that are at the fair – we do it on kids day – can participate. I have a Cloverbud key leader and she helps with the one day Cloverbud day camp and she also helps with the fair events. She also helps, we do special Cloverbud volunteer training, where we do a lot on ages and stages and a little crafts and tips and hints and we have Cloverbud kids that we work with and we do all of that during our Cloverbud volunteer training. We participate in a Cloverbud overnight at Canter’s Cave and I have children and their parents get to go to that since it’s an overnight. In the fair, we have what we call Clover Corner where the different groups can develop their own booths. It’s more than just sort of one display, they can get a whole booth just like any of the other clubs. Some of them are pretty elaborate and some are just smaller. That lets the kids distribute or show what they’ve done throughout the year. I think that is about all of it.

Q: Moving on to question 2… (new directions about answering)…

P3: One of the other things that we have done in _____ county, in addition to going to the in schools and doing some promotion through reading, because the teachers are really, they welcome that when we come into the classrooms and also the school administrators welcome that when we do that type of a program. But we also have a 4-H promotion tab that we work with, that is a tabloid that we work with the local newspaper and that is printed during 4-H week. So I usually ask some of the Cloverbuds to write a few articles for that too. I usually have them write about Cloverbud camp. I haven’t had them right about just being a Cloverbud in general, but I’ll ask about three or four of the Cloverbud members to write a little article about what they did at Cloverbud camp, how much fun it was and all of that. SO that is kind of a recruitment piece also.

P8: During our Clover Clues at the fair, when they finish the scavenger hunt, they get a goodie bag sponsored by 4-H Committee and it is filled with all of the information on how they join 4-H, what kind of clubs, where the clubs are and all the contact information and all of that is put in there. We usually give out,
I think last year we gave out over 100 of those.
P2: I don’t currently have a Cloverbud graduation in the county that I am in now, but the county that I came from, we did have a Cloverbud graduation, and with that graduation, each of the kids all got a Cloverbud pencil and an invitation to join the traditional program. So it was one step beyond Cloverbuds, it wasn’t Cloverbud recruitment, but it was a recruitment tool with Cloverbuds.
P4: I guess in that same way, Cloverbud graduation, ours was the first time ever last year, every kid that graduated got a Cloverbud t-shirt that said Cloverbud graduation on it and that did generate some interest.
P2: Oh, and we have camp t-shirts also.
P7: We’ve done that as well. We do Cloverbud camp t-shirts. I have, I think we have 4-H clubs that already have a group being Cloverbud group will visit the appropriate grade levels in their schools and do recruitment for their clubs and that has worked really well too.

P6: In ____ County, we have not really done a lot to recruit Cloverbud specifically, and we are pretty much doing the people who are siblings of older members, as well as those that hear by word of mouth, and the club does some recruitment of Cloverbuds. But as a countywide effort, we don’t do anything in the schools for those grades. We have sent out, in our general recruitment, we do articles about Cloverbuds and things that go in the paper, but not anything that is – it is all wrapped into the general 4-H where we talk about different programs that are offered, all part of 4-H, and Cloverbuds is one of them. So, it is all melted together more than anything specific to Cloverbuds.
P5: And that’s what we do in ________ county also. The only other thing we do is sometimes we have special events going on like this year we are doing a program called “J-fit” with fitness activities that we are doing every month. And Cloverbuds are invited, and all 4-H members, including Cloverbuds are allowed to bring a friend. So we have had a lot of new kids coming because they are just coming as a friend of a 4-H member and we have yet to see if that fazes kids who join because we just started that this year.
I: Can you tell us a little but more about that program?
P5: Our Junior Leaders came up with that program because I talked to them about the whole issue of childhood obesity, so we just thought a fun thing to do would be find activities in our county or close by that are just there, are fun activities that may be overlooked, but they are ways to get kids off the couch. So, each month we go somewhere and do something fun. We have been roller-skating, and bowling, and we are going ice-skating, we have been having dances. And our smallest event so far, we have had 50 kids at. We have had up to over 100 at a couple of the activities. If any of you get the catalog from a company called “fitness finders,” and you’ll remember it if you got it, it had a catalog, but then it also had all of these little plastic beads in it, and a little chain like a key ring, just something really cute, so I wrote a 4-H foundation grant and got $500 to use toward promoting this program. So, we bought a bunch of little fitness finder beads, so every time the kids come to a J-fit activity, they get their key ring the first time – it’s a little chain, we say key ring or zipper pull - and they get that at the first J-fit activity, and then, they get a bead at every activity they come to. And you would not believe how popular this thing is – these cheap little beads – the kids want them, they are trying to collect them all. So, it’s been really fun. And like I said, the Cloverbuds are just invited along with the other kids and they have been coming.

I: Does anyone else have a different experience, or a similar experience?

23:06

P8: We started targeting Cloverbuds in our afterschool program. We have clubs meet every other week as part of afterschool, and then usually throughout the year, we go in and we do special activities with them as our schedule fits. With the kids, we have hatched eggs, we’ve done ag. in the classroom activities with them, just whatever kind of little activities that we can do with their clubs, even with all of the kids that are attending afterschool for that evening. And then we always pass out something that says 4-H – balloons or pencils, little flyers that advertise what we’ve got coming up, a day camp or whatever.

24:00

P3: Something else that our clubs have done, it’s not really something that we have done through our office, but a lot of the 4-H Clubs and Cloverbud groups, they will participate in local community parades. And not only community parades, but we have a Jr. Fair parade the first day of our fair, and a lot of clubs and Cloverbud clubs participate in that, so it does create interest in the program.
In our 4-H booth during the fair, most of the clubs that have Cloverbuds in them do a really nice job of making sure their section is really designated for Cloverbuds, so there is visibility there.

I just wanted to find something that we stumbled upon, like I said earlier, we do the and first grade, we didn’t do 2nd grade because we figured it was only one year, the recruitment in our schools, and then on the forms that they filled out, we had a place to mark if their parent was interested in becoming a 4-H volunteer, and when we had too many kids in our clubs and we were saturated, we went back to those forms that the parents had marked. And we found that that was a really easy recruitment tool, for Cloverbud volunteers especially.

That leads us into our next question.

I think the reason people responded on those forms, and why I said Cloverbuds especially, I think those are the parents who are more likely to volunteer. When you get them early on, it’s easier to get them involved, and once they are involved, it is easier to keep them on board.

Cloverbud advisors started out as parents attending club meetings, are the parents that usually stay, and then my volunteers kind of hold them and bring them in as Cloverbud advisors. My volunteers have been very affective, I’m almost sure, almost all of my clubs have at least one Cloverbud advisor.

That’s what I see a lot in ours too, is that somebody that is already a parent and then they get recruited by the club.

And that’s the same here as well. I think all of our Cloverbud advisors have kids in the program. And then typically, they will transfer up to advisors for the project club once their kids move from Cloverbuds.

That’s what we have here as far as the volunteers. As far as recruiting parents, most of them I think have some sort of 4-H connection. Whether the parent was a 4-Her themselves, they somewhere along the line became aware of Cloverbuds. It was not in existence when we were 4-Hers. They want to get their kids involved early in 4-H. So as far as recruiting parents, I don’t have a tool that recruits them better than youth. Some of those parents do become the volunteers then when the club does need someone because their kid is in. I’ve got several new volunteers this year that never have been doing it, their kids moved up, and they volunteered to meet the need the club had.

That’s what we have found here too. Our clubs have proven to be the best recruitment tools, our current volunteers, to get those new individuals into those Cloverbud volunteer spots. So we haven’t necessarily done anything different, or done much promoting of getting our new volunteers into those positions, rather it’s our current volunteers recruiting them.

Another thing we’ve seen with volunteer positions is teen leaders stepping up and doing a lot of the Cloverbud activities in a club setting in that teen mentor type role.

Does anyone have anything different … just having their children be in the program ….. Next Question … of the techniques ….

Brothers and sisters that are already in. I agree. Yes. Same here. Friends recruiting friends. A little kid going to t-ball and getting the team to join.

We can’t get into schools to do the presentations that some of you talked about, but we send fliers to the schools. This year I tried something different that worked fairly well. That was to ask the teacher if they have been a Cloverbud parent to describe what takes place in Cloverbuds to the kids when they pass the flyer out. If they haven’t been, to find out if there is already a Cloverbud in the classroom and let them talk a little bit about it. And that was pretty effective in getting new members. Something very simple.

Other strategies that you have used? Anything different?

I’m not sure how effective this is, but we also when we are in the classrooms and visiting, we also send them a flyer that is geared directly towards the parents. And it is basically stating that we are looking for new Cloverbud clubs in your area and it basically states to contact the Extension office for further information. Like I said, I’m not sure how successful it has been, but at least it puts the word out there.

One of the other things we have used in terms of recruiting even members is to put placemats, we design placemats ourselves here in the office and they go in the local family restaurants with a number of where they can contact for more information about 4-H. Any of our 4-H programs. So that’s kind of an
effective tool too. And we always put games on there so the kids have something to do while they are waiting for their meal.

P5: Where do you get those placemats made?

P7: We make them ourselves actually.

P5: O, you do?!

P7: Yes, our 4-H Committee buys the paper and we print them off here.

P5: Do you just use 11x17 paper, or what do you use?

P7: Yes. Well, you need to talk to your restaurants to find out what size they prefer. Some will take 11x17, some would rather have the 14 inch, because the 11x17 is too big for their tables.

P5: And do you laminate them?

P7: No, no they are just disposable sheets of paper.

P4: (Something)___ too. A basic one that has some games on one side. We’ve used them for 4-H week before. We’ve ordered them out of the source book and then put our contact information on. They had games and different things on them. It’s been a couple years since we’ve done that. But the tray liners – a lot of the restaurants have no problem doing that.

I: Any other recruitment strategies?

I: Ok, move on to the next questions… barriers…

P5: So, specifically you mean recruiting things that have failed?

I: Yea

P5: Or barriers in getting Cloverbuds to join?

I: Both, actually.

P5: I just think a lot of times parents look into it, but when they find out that their kids can’t show an animal at the fair, they don’t join.

P4: Exactly.

They still associate 4-H with the fair. If my kid can’t show at the fair, then I am just going to wait.

Others respond:

Exactly.

That’s very true.

P6: I don’t get that response often, not that they can’t join fair, but that they have to wait one more year. And they are still doing the Cloverbud thing, but behind that you can still tell that it’s just what has to happen before third grade.

P6: As far as barriers on other types of marketing, I know several said they go into the classrooms, and for me, the resources to be able to do that, time resources, is a barrier. We do that currently with the third graders and get in, but I can’t imagine trying to schedule an addition, all of those schools. Just one of our school systems has fifteen classrooms to get to, or 15… We are at the point of having about 23 third grade classroom visits. 23 schools to visit. So, I can’t imagine doing that again with Kindergartners. I barley make enough volunteers and teams together to hit what we’ve got with the time that those kids have to get out of school. I can’t imagine how I could do it with Kindergartners too.

36:20

P5: It’s the same here. We have six schools districts and there are just too many to try to get out to. So when we have clubs that want new members, we put fliers or whatever. I will even go to the school for them or they will go themselves, but I don’t coordinate any big county-wide thing because there aren’t
enough people.
P2: I am still coordinating it be we hit, I think it was either 23 or 24 schools, if we get them all scheduled.
P2: I’ve only done it the one year, but what I was saying about the letter to the teachers, with the fliers this
year, was as effective for us this year as it was in the past in the other county I worked in with making the
visits. So the teacher or a child in the classroom was telling about the 4-H program. It wasn’t one of our
kids going and doing it, it was someone from within.
P6: I guess that would be alright for some of my schools where I know they are 4-Hers, but for the
Olentangy system where there are just not that many current 4-Hers, compared to the number of kids, I
can’t guarantee there is a 4-Her per every classroom. I mean they are getting ready to build their third high
school, so…

P2: I did also send some information in case they got in that bind. Something they could share with
themselves.

P6: Okay.

P8: We had some problems getting in during school hours because of schedules being so busy and
everything. And that is why we starting moving to the afterschool. Because the afterschool is, everybody is
together. You don’t have to worry about visiting 20 some classrooms because all of the kids that stay are all
together, and it made it a little bit easier for us to manage. We can go in and talk to one group, rather than
making 23 different stops. And the afterschool is much more approachable about letting us come and go
when we please and when we wanted to.
P3: I think another barrier is the lack of volunteers. You can always take more volunteers. The more
volunteers you have to start new clubs, so those would be new volunteers for new clubs would be a barrier.
P4: And the right mindset on it too. I had folks that opened up Cloverbuds in their clubs, but they didn’t
really have anyone focusing on it. That became a barrier to maintain membership. They tried, but it wasn’t
their thing, and they got more into it than they thought they would.
P7: Another barrier is that some of our advisors, who have been around for a long time, view the Cloverbud
program as baby-sitting. So it is changing their mindset that this is a worthwhile program, and the kids have
constructive activities.
39:23
P8: One barrier that I’ve had is that some of my parents have started with their kids very young, and now
they are grown into teenagers, and they really don’t want younger kids back in their club, because they
want to be done when their kids graduate, so they’ve said “we don’t want Cloverbuds.” I don’t have very
many like that, but I have a couple of them and they are all teens in that club, and they don’t take younger
kids.
P6: And what they don’t realize is eventually, that means the club dies. We’ve had that happen in a couple
clubs that just end up dying because of that. Because they become an only older club and then …
P8: I think there are a couple clubs in particular where they know that and they are okay with their club
leaving when their kids leave because all of their kids are the same age.
P6: And sometimes that’s just how it is and somebody starts another club and it all ends up working out,
but… I’ve seen that happen.
P6: We have where not every club in our county has to take Cloverbuds. So we don’t absolutely require
that they all have to have Cloverbuds and for those that are older clubs, those kids, you know, parents want
their kids to go where there is other kids like them – their age and their interest.

I: P1, we haven’t heard from you in a little while, have you had any different experiences?
P1: Not really. I noticed that this year I had more Cloverbuds coming in and it was getting harder to place
them. Because, kind of like P6, we don’t require that every club have a Cloverbud trained advisor within
their own club, so by the time we got closer to our enrollment deadline, it was harder for me to find clubs
because some of our clubs that do the Cloverbuds had reached their maximum for the numbers that they
were wanting, so it was getting harder for me to place them. So probably, you know, getting enough
volunteers would be one of the barriers that we have had, so that we can get all of the Cloverbuds that are
interested into a club.
I: Anyone else have comments?
P3: Did someone mention that kids are already involved in too many things and 4-H is just an added activity. Did someone say that? Like already involved in t-ball, and soccer. To me, that’s a barrier also. Kids are too busy.
P5: And that is for all of 4-H. A barrier for all of them. (Ps agreeing – yes)
And I see sports starting younger and younger all the time. (Ps agreeing – yes)
P2: And it’s being more demanding. It is true for all ages, but it use to not be as big with the younger kids, but now it is still there.
I: Okay, well we are going to move on…
P5: We had one that we discontinued, not because I wanted to, but we used to have a puppet club, and the puppet club would go to the schools and go to the first grade classes. And the puppet club disbanded; I can’t find a volunteer for it. So, the puppets sit in the closet. But it was very successful when we had it, and I am still trying to find a volunteer to take it and do that. And the puppet skits would all have to do with joining 4-H. So when they would go into the schools and do a puppet show, they would have 20 kids wanting to talk to them when they were done because they would all want to join 4-H because of the puppets. And some of it panned out and of course some of them wouldn’t because mom would say, no you already have enough stuff or whatever, so they wouldn’t end up joining. But, it still brought a lot of interest.
I: Has anyone else had to discontinue…
P2: I think the classroom visits, we’ve all alluded to that, that for one reason or another, it’s been an issue in getting into the classrooms and doing the programming. Be it the number of volunteers used to help with the program, or being the school schedule, and we’ve talked about that in several ways.
I: Question to go along with that…
Lack of volunteers, and school schedule, anything else?
PAUSE
Next question: What messages do you try to send out about the Cloverbud program?
P8: I stress that Cloverbuds is non-competitive. That it is more of a fun interactive activity to get the kids involved in understanding what 4-H is all about. I try to keep it away from the whole issue of, well we can’t show things at the fair. We talk about all of the things they can do at the fair instead.
P5: I just try to stress that it is teacher-centered instead of the clubs being run by members like the older 4-H club.
P4: And I would usually, when I am working with my volunteers or teen leaders that are doing that, that the difference is that there is time that the Cloverbuds are going to do something special just for them.
P2: One thing we missed is there age. I would assume we are all pointing that out also. That it is for Kindergarten to second graders.
P3: We also focus on that it is activity based, and I think that was mentioned, but we really try to drive that. They are doing activities during their meeting times.
P7: I also suggest that we are promoting self-esteem and growth among the younger kids. Corporative learning and social skills.
P2: When P3 said activity based, I usually also try to point out that they are short term activities. You know, 15 or 20 minutes at a time, so that they are to the attention span of the age group.
P4: And I usually point out the resources that are available, because a lot of times, especially with new Cloverbud volunteers, they just come in and say, “I’ve come up with every craft I can think of!” And we point out that there are the resource materials, there are the kits, and stuff that can keep them busy for months if they just ask to borrow it, which I tell them about all the time. But the resource kits have been a major plus. I think I usually have mine loaned out on a month to month basis.
P5: Yeah mine too. I agree ours go out quite a bit. Yes.
I: What messages are the most successful with youth?
P4: I think that for my Cloverbuds it’s the stuff they get to do. Out of 40 kids that could have possibly graduated last year, I think I had 33 who actually participated in Cloverbud graduation. Cloverbud day camp, they see that there is stuff that is specific for them. That is really successful.
P2: We always talk about fun activities that they can do with their friends. And that seems to be a drawing card for them.
P3: Yeah, I would agree, that’s the main message we send to the kids is fun.
All P: Yeah, I agree, yes..
I: Anyone have an additional message…

OK. What message / parents..
P8: We always bring out the social aspects of it. They get to do the Cloverbud show and tell, so that gets them talking to people, and they get to be part of a group, and they get to do a lot of one on one things either with their parents or with their advisors as a positive adult with kids, focusing the attention on the Cloverbud activity.
P2: I would agree, that they are building life skills, and some of what those life skills are, those social skills and that kind of thing are really important with parents.
P1: Yeah, because we also, somebody else mentioned it earlier, but we also do a part in our speaking and demonstrations contest day where they can come in and be participants in that. Also, being able to display the things at the fair that they have worked hard on all year, within their club booth.
I: Any other messages that you try to send out to parents?

P2: I think the caring adult is really important to the Cloverbud program. It is at all levels, but I think in the Cloverbud program, it is even more important for those kids to know that somebody cares about them.
P5: And I think the fact that they are doing something different from the older members. In most of our clubs, the Cloverbuds meet with the bigger club. They do their pledges and all of that, then they separate out and go to another room and do all of their activities. So parents really do see them as separate and special.
P2: Some of the clubs will also bring them back again and let them share with the bigger group what they have done too, and that makes them feel even more special because other people know what they are doing.
P6: I think it still comes down to the volunteers, is what makes it successful or not, their ability to organize things and how they set that up, as far as the activities and leaving and coming back. That great volunteer who is that caring person, that great volunteer who does those things and sets that up is the biggest key to having a successful program.
P1: I agree, because you could have a volunteer who just basically goes through the motions within a Cloverbud program, or you could have the one who kind of goes that step above and really gets them involved. I have one program in the county, it’s just, they go above and beyond, and I think that’s why their club program is so successful.
I: What else can we say about the success of the Cloverbud program?
P7: I would say one of our successes has been most of those kids transitioning up to the project based club, so it is a good recruitment tool in effect for us to keep kids involved. And also if kids stay in the program the whole way through, they have maybe 12, 13, 14 years involved in 4-H which looks good on college applications, employer applications, those type of things.
I: Is there anything else…?
P3: Libby, I would just reiterate the whole volunteer piece because if you have the key, caring volunteer in there, they can make anything happen, even without curriculum and everything else.
P6: If they are enthusiastic they can make anything fun.
(Volunteer – to clarify)
P5: We have a club where there is a very enthusiastic volunteer, and I’ve had kids from the older club tell me that the Cloverbuds have more fun than them. So, a volunteer can make it or break it.
I: Move on to the last question…
P5: Something that we haven’t discussed is the state Cloverbud team and __ and I are both on that, I don’t know if there is anyone else on this phone call that’s on it, one thing we are working on is the Cloverbud website, and hopefully within the next year, __ you think?
P7: I’m on that P5, and ____ and I are working on that.
P5: And I think that will be a great recruitment tool, once we get that in place. It’s going to look different from the other website, it’s going to be fun and interactive, and I think that will be a good recruitment piece once it happens.
P4: And I think too, the Cloverbud newsletter that always goes out, my volunteers always enjoy that. They get an idea or two. Somebody is always mentioning that they get something out of that. It’s one more support piece that we provide out there to them.
P3: I guess I thought we’d talk a little bit more about statewide efforts for Cloverbud recruitment for just some promotional efforts that are done on a statewide level.
I: Can you say anything else about that P3?
P3: I think that our marketing and promotion pieces need to be freshened up and they need to be new and different for different audiences. We probably need some things out there that we could use at the county level.
I: Anyone else?
P7: This kind of goes along with that. What P3 is saying, I agree we need uniform marketing, but we also need to educate people in the counties that are working with the program in Extension about what Cloverbuds is. I’m not sure that all educators even have an understanding of the program. So that might be something that needs to be done.

P2: One of the things recently that I ran across was, and it’s kind of an important piece for advisors, is when you look at your traditional program advisors, or volunteers, your Cloverbud volunteers know a lot about those policies and a lot about what Cloverbuds is about, but if the kids are leaving and doing their own thing and coming back, the traditional people really have a very limited perspective unless the Cloverbud volunteers are sharing. And I think we need to educate our traditional volunteers more about what Cloverbuds is really about.
I: Can we say anything else? Further comments?
As we explained… purpose… summary…. Anything that we’ve missed? Last comments?

Will we receive any type of follow up from the focus groups?

I: Thank you! Etc.