R U Connected?
Volunteers, Social Media and Texting
Becky Walker, Extension Educator 4-H Youth Development, Pontotoc County

What is social media and texting?
Social media and texting have quickly become the way for volunteers to stay connected to each other and to 4-H members.

Social media can bring together groups of people for a specific reason or cause. It provides a sense of belonging and is a place to meet new people and reconnect with past acquaintances, friends and coworkers.

There are thousands of sites that incorporate social networking. Any time you can post an item and people can respond, chat, etc., this is considered a social media site. The most popular site right now is Facebook followed by MySpace, Twitter and YouTube.

Most people who are involved in social media sites are posting messages, sharing photos, uploading and downloading music or blogging.

Text messaging is known as SMS (Short Message Service). The facts we must face is that it is the preferred method of communication for pre-teens and teens. A text messaging language has developed from this technology and while there are benefits to texting, there is still evidence that parental boundaries are required for its safe and effective use.

Implications for Volunteers
Volunteers can effectively use this technology to communicate with fellow volunteers, parents and 4-H members. It is important to be proactive. Establish a written agreement with your 4-H members/volunteers that it is okay for them to receive and send text messages. (Continued on page 2)

Youth Development
The philosophy of youth development involves both the family and community. This model supports healthy development in a safe environment where young people are not “clients” but partners. Families are not incidental to the process, their neighbors are not indifferent bystanders, and other community resources are not ignored. (Youth Development: On the Path Toward Professionalization, National Assembly, 1999)

Youth development programs prepare young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a structured, progressive series of activities and experiences, which help them obtain social, emotional, ethical, physical and cognitive competencies. (National Collaboration for Youth Members, March 1998)
Social media sites are excellent ways to communicate with 4-H members. For example, Facebook provides the opportunity to set up a group that your 4-H members and volunteers can join. Once they join they can receive notifications when information is updated.

As the creator of this group or the volunteer in charge of the group, set boundaries. Anyone who joins should understand that everything posted should be positive and in good taste. Neither you nor members of the group should force personal opinions on any other member nor should it be a place to harass any particular member or volunteer.

Social media sites should be monitored regularly. Communicate with your 4-H members and volunteers, that nothing but positive, essential items should be posted. This includes appropriate photos as well as comments.

Social media and texting promotes the use of technology with 4-H members and volunteers. Both can be great tools for volunteers to stay connected!

**Club Management Tip**

The term *youth-adult partnerships* (YAP) is a misunderstood, yet fundamental principle of 4-H. A partnership has occurred when youth and adults work together in meaningful roles.

This does not mean youth or adults do as they please. YAP is much like a teeter-totter or balancing act. Each contributes to the project by sharing their expertise, skills and knowledge. Youth may train adults and adults may train youth. Another analogy would be a family, each member has strengths and weaknesses. Each individual contributes to the whole—sharing strengths and providing guidance for lack of experience or shortfalls.

Adults form constructive and encouraging partnerships with youth if they remember young people are still people. They have their own deadlines, pressures and schedules, just as demanding and stressful as those of adults. Here are some tips for forming healthy relationships with youth.

- Don’t expect more from youth than you would from an adult.
- Don’t underestimate youth.
- Treat youth as individuals.
- Be careful about interrupting.
- Don’t move too fast.
Marketing 4-H—A Common Sense Approach
put into Practice

Jessica Stewart, Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Coordinator – Special Promotions and Programs

Shifts are occurring in the way people consume media. The advent of social media, Internet videos, and blogging is changing people’s reading habits and perceptions. According to a study by the University of California at San Diego, the average American ingests 105,000 words daily from various forms of media. This is a 350 percent increase in how much we were reading as compared to three decades ago. Consequently, we have learned to carefully choose what we read, considering a Google search of the word “blog” provides a whopping 2,900,000,000 results. The exponential increase in media is a reason we also have to see a shift in how we market 4-H. While Oklahoma 4-H’ers have always been encouraged to tell their 4-H story, focusing on the life skills they’ve learned and how they’ve grown through their 4-H project, it seems the rest of us have been focusing primarily on projects and statistics to try to tell the same story. But, a robotics project doesn’t have passion or emotion. People do.

As we begin the next century of 4-H, the shift we need is in how stories are told. Stories need to focus on human capital built. The projects are still incredibly important, and while they

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Note from the State 4-H Program Leader

Good communications save hurt feelings, keeps people informed, keeps folks connected and can help tell the 4-H story.

Keeping Informed—Most calls I receive from upset parents, volunteers and staff deal with a breakdown in communications.

At this time of year I always hear from a few VERY angry people who did not know the 4-H enrollment deadline to be eligible to exhibit livestock or a missed entry deadline. The perception is that it was a volunteer or educator’s fault.

There are also the upset volunteers who never hear from the county staff and the county staff who claim that no one ever reads their mail.

In each case a breakdown in communication has occurred. Communication requires a sender and receiver for an information exchange. I think of it as making a telephone call. You call, but if no one answers, you cannot communicate with the person being called. Granted, a message can be left, but there is no assurance that it will be listened to or understood.

Staying Connected—In an age where there is more electronic communication than ever before we can blog, post, ping, tweet, ping and e-mail all day long. While this may be fast and easy, the reality is that people get information overload. Once again, communication breakdown happens because a message may be missed or lost among other messages.

Telling a Story—Finally, good communications can help us tell our story. As a parent or volunteer, one of the best things we can do for a child is to help them learn to write and speak in a way that allows them to tell their story. In a competitive job market, youth learn how to explain what they know and skills they possess.

4-H has a variety of publications that are good tools in helping young people learn oral and written skills. Go the Oklahoma 4-H website and check out the literature on line section http://oklahoma4h.okstate.edu/litol/. Communication and Speaking (4-H Comm 300). Hint...there are individual lessons which would be good for a monthly 4-H club meeting.

As we continue to expand the way we deliver information about 4-H our goal is to help keep people informed of opportunities.

We have a high regard and respect for our 4-H volunteers because we know how much you do. Our goal is that the Volunteer Connection is a tool to help you be effective and successful.

Charles Cox
Charles B. Cox, Professor/Asst. Director
(Continued from page 3)

are the foundation, it’s the life skills – the success and the life accomplishments – that provide the “so what?” to those who aren’t familiar with 4-H and believe that it is still cows and cookies. We can then use 4-H projects to explain what caused Sally to have the tenacity to become a world-renown executive CEO of a corporation, or how Tommy overcame a major life obstacle through 4-H project work. The stories are in the member, volunteer and staff successes, and the projects are the tool that gets them there.

Most importantly, by communicating the 4-H story through human impact stories, 4-H will continue to deliver perhaps the most compelling message: Oklahoma needs 4-H!

Cathy’s Curriculum Corner

Volunteers please take a moment and visit the newly updated and formatted Oklahoma 4-H Literature On line website located at http://oklahoma4h.okstate.edu/litol/

Materials located on this site are available to volunteers and members at no cost. During the past year we updated and added many pieces of literature ranging from Forestry Inventory to Pet Preparedness. Curriculum development is a work in progress and we will continue to add curriculum throughout the year, so please check back frequently and continue to read Curriculum Corner.

Oklahoma 4-H curriculum and literature pieces are developed and updated by Oklahoma State University faculty and Extension staff. Our new curriculum pieces focus on age-appropriate subject matter, as well as experiential, activity-based learning that allow youth to progressively gain knowledge about subjects that interest them.

When considering members of your club, it is important to remember that that young people have different learning styles and therefore will approach or respond to a learning activity differently. As a volunteer, you will have the most success in appealing to club members if you provide a wide variety of materials and activities with opportunities for all learning styles. You will want to include opportunities for those youth who prefer to learn

- by reading (print learners)
- by hearing; sound and voice (auditory learners)
- by touching or manipulating objects (tactile learners)
- from what they see; color, shape and form (visual learners)
- by using their bodies; rhythm and movement (kinesthetic learners)
- by working in groups (interactive learners)
- by working independently (independent learners)
- by observing others do something (observational learners)
- with a lot of direction
- by figuring things out with little direction

Effective youth programs incorporate many activities in their programs that appeal to all of these learning styles.

National 4-H Council Pre-Press Sale

Also, do not miss the opportunity to take advantage of the once a year Pre-Press curriculum sale from National 4-H Council. The annual curriculum pre-press sale begins on April 1st and continues through April 25th. What is pre-press? Pre-press is the time when you can purchase National 4-H Curriculum products at a savings of 35%! To take advantage of this discount go to www.4-hmall.org or call 301-961-2934.

Snip it for the frig....
The purpose of a 4-H story in the record keeping process is to “tell the story.”
The story is the place for a young person to share what they learned, not in the literal sense but what they learned in their heart and mind, how they developed character, as well as what they learned through service to others.

A reader should be able to relate to experiences in their own life.

4-H curriculum provides the fundamentals youth need to develop skills in a particular project.

Cathy Allen, Assistant Ext. Specialist

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State Parent-Volunteer Conference

“Set Sail with 4-H...Charting Our Future” is the theme of the 2010 State Parent-Volunteer Conference. The conference is scheduled for July 17, in Stillwater.

There will be four tracks of workshops:
Track 1 - “Enlightening” 4-H Parents and Volunteers – Diverse 4-H experiences and opportunities develop capable youth.

Track 2 - “Encouraging” 4-H Parents and Volunteers – Establish and nurture support networks with fellow volunteers, county, district and state extension staff, district officers, state ambassadors and state council members.

Track 3 – “Educating” 4-H Parents and Volunteers – Information Literacy develops project leaders, committee members, club leaders, parents, leadership teams, as well as club and county programs.

Track 4 – “Enjoying” being a 4-H Parent and Volunteer – Hands on workshops, better known as Fun Shops in the areas of recreation, educational crafts, food science, model rockets, etc.

Conference Registration, scholarships and program will be posted May 1 at http://oklahoma4h.okstate.edu/volun/eduupp.htm.

Share Fair—County Parent-Volunteer/Leaders Associations are encouraged to develop a display for the Share Fair. The displays should showcase successful service-learning projects, 4-H promotions or 4-H partnerships (organizations and/or individuals who help make your county’s 4-H clubs successful). Each county is limited to one display which must be registered by June 1.

Conference Service Project – Operation Military Kids Family Night Package
To encourage and support quality family night activities of our OMK families we are hopeful volunteers will prepare and bring family night packages to the PVC. Family night package might include: a snack and a game; a snack and a movie; craft or cooking activity; family dinner or picnic; etc.

Ideas:
- Snacks – Popcorn, mixes for Brownies, Cookies, soup, etc.
- Family Dinner – family favorite recipes/dinner plan/picnic: starter kit and decorations that everyone could take part
- Games – Board games, cards, outdoor games, etc.
- Movie – DVD
- Craft – an activity that the whole family could take part in constructing
- Other – Movie, Park, Zoo passes

Be creative...think about what your family would enjoy doing if they had been or were going to be separated for a long period of time.

Debbie Wilson
State Volunteer Board President

State Volunteer Board - http://oklahoma4h.okstate.edu/volun/volunboard.htm

SOUTHWEST DISTRICT
Kelley McGlothlin
Debbie Ashton
Glynadee Edwards

NORTHWEST DISTRICT
Brenda Kindschi
Sandra KloeppeL
Janel Glazier

SOUTHEAST DISTRICT
Debbie Wilson
Toni Jones
Cindy Larson

NORTHEAST DISTRICT
Vacant
Donna Dollins
Vacant
Monsanto Scholarships—4-H PVC

Oklahoma 4-H received a grant from National 4-H Council, in partnership with Monsanto, to underwrite our State Parent-Volunteer Conference for a fourth year.

Up to one-hundred (100) $30 scholarships would be awarded to “certified 4-H adult volunteers” applying to attend the conference for the first time.

To be eligible for the scholarship, the volunteers must all ready be certified – paperwork, screening and orientation completed prior to making application.

To apply complete the scholarship form and have it signed by the county educator/university representative prior to submitting the scholarship application. Scholarships will be dated as they are received in the state 4-H office.

If awarded a scholarship the volunteer is expected to do a presentation at their local club for parents/volunteers or at a county Parent-Volunteer Association meeting.

If a scholarship is awarded, please be committed to attending and returning home to share your experiences.

We want all scholarships to be used the day of the conference.

Any one who chooses not to make use of their scholarship will need to notify the state office one week prior to the conference so alternates can be notified.

Monsanto has a long-standing tradition of providing support for 4-H, “noted Jim Tobin, director, biotech business development, Monsanto. who presented the $500,000 training award to 4-H. “Many company employees were 4-H members, and tell us that they credit 4-H for many of the skills they use today to do their jobs—a real credit to the 4-H volunteer leaders who assisted them in their learning process.”

4-H Creed for Volunteers

We Believe:

• The 4-H member is more important than the 4-H project.
• Learning how to do the project is more important than the project itself.
• 4-H’ers should be their own best exhibits.
• No award is worth sacrificing the reputation of a member or a volunteer.
• Competition should be given no more emphasis than other fundamentals of 4-H work.
• Enthusiasm is caught, not taught.
• To learn by doing is fundamental in any sound educational program and is characteristic of the 4-H program.
• Generally speaking, there is more than one good way to do most things.
• Every 4-H member needs to be noticed, to feel important, to win and be praised (volunteers, too).
• Our job as volunteers is to teach 4-H members how to think, not what to think.

Q & A
Do you have a question for a fellow volunteer or extension professional?

Idea Exchange
Would you like to share a successful experience or new idea?
Email question, ideas and photos to karla.knoepfler@okstate.edu.
In future issues we will address some of the topics and share ideas.

Recycling idea provided by Annie Bragg, Cleveland County.
Paper Clover Toolkit

Tractor Supply Company (TSC) stores are joining 4-H in support of local youth with the TSC Paper Clover Campaign, a national in-store fundraising effort to benefit state and local 4-H programs.

Beginning Friday, March 26, through Sunday, April 18, shoppers will have the opportunity to support 4-H by purchasing paper clovers for $1 at checkout. All funds raised through this local TSC Paper Clover Campaign will be donated to 4-H, and will support local camps, after-school programs and other 4-H youth development program activities.

“Many of our stores have been involved with 4-H clubs for years. Now, Tractor Supply Company is proud to have an official chain-wide relationship with 4-H,” said Tractor Supply Company.

Southern Region Volunteer Forum

“4H: There’s an App for That” - Southern Region 4-H Volunteer Forum (SRVF) – Deposit due July 16th

Looking for a way to rejuvenate your enthusiasm as a volunteer or county educator? Rock Eagle is the place! The best way to describe the experience is 4-H Camp for Adults. The days are packed with excellent workshops and the evenings are filled with entertainment and Fun Shops. To view a video of the 2009 conference, follow the link http://www.4hsrcf.org/09SRVF/09forum.htm.

The conference will be held in Eatonton Georgia, September 30 - October 3, 2010. Full Conference registration will not exceed $275. A $50 deposit is due July 16, 2010 remaining balance is due August 20th. Visit the host state conference site at www.4hsrcf.org for current information regarding the conference. Participants are responsible for their own transportation. Oklahoma typically travels as a group via air transportation.

The mission of the Southern Region 4-H Volunteer Leader Forum is to increase the capacity of volunteer and salaried staff to contribute to the achievement of the mission of 4-H youth development and the Cooperative Extension system as a whole. The primary purpose of the forum is to educate and prepare participants to share what they learned back home. Participants benefit from the experiential learning activities which require them to discuss, use and apply what they learn. The ultimate application is for individuals and teams to teach others.

SRVLF is an excellent opportunity to meet adult volunteers from 13 southern states, Puerto Rico, Grenada and the Virgin Islands.

NEWS ON THE STREET...

You can earn recognition Nation-wide by going to http://serve.gov/ to post any community service activities going on in your area. The sight is very simple and easy to use.

The site provides a Tool Kits for planning projects like Book and Clothing Drives.

What better way to remind our decision makers in Washington D.C. how important 4-H Clubs are to our nation and economy.

VOLUNTEER..... It does the Head, Heart, Hands and Health good!