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Imperial County Board of Supervisors approves funding for new 4-H Club in Calexico

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By SHANNA ABATTI, Special to this Newspaper | 0 comments

Calexico 4-H wants you. This new community 4-H Club will be officially opening its doors this August. The University of California Cooperative Extension-Imperial County, in partnership with Imperial County Board of Supervisor John Renison have met to begin opening this new club's doors.

4-H has had a strong presence in Imperial County for well over 100 years with clubs spanning across the Imperial Valley from Heber to Calipatria, Holtville to Seeley and all cities in between. There are four clubs that meet in El Centro, three in Brawley, two in Holtville, one each in Imperial, Heber and Calipatria, and even one in Westmorland, but there are none in Calexico.

It has been nearly 20 years since Calexico has had a 4-H Club. With Calexico the second largest city in Imperial County and 31.1 percent of its population under the age of 18 there is definitely a need for this community organization's presence.

Why 4-H? What sets it apart from other youth organizations?

4-H is a research based, learn-by-doing program that helps develop problem solving, decision making, and communication skills in its youth members. 4-H changes lives, helping youth to become confident, mature adults ready to succeed in today's challenging world. Studies show that youth participating in 4-H do better in school, are more motivated to help others, feel safe to try new things and develop lasting friendships. The fundamental 4-H ideal of practical, learn-by-doing experiences encourages youth to experiment, innovate and think independently.

Youth learn leadership, citizenship and life skills through more than 1,000 projects with topics as varied as rocketry, animal science, STEM, GPS mapping, DNA analysis, public speaking, leadership, photography, nutrition and community service.

One of the biggest challenges that the UCCE-Imperial County 4-H Youth Development Program faces in opening up any new club is finding volunteer leaders. There are currently two staff members and 250 volunteers who drive the current 14 clubs in Imperial County. Clubs are usually made up of 1-2 organizational leaders and a multitude of project leaders. These project leaders organize six hours worth of fun, learning activities throughout the year. Whether you know a little about photography, are interested in hiking, folklorico, arts and crafts, animals, or any other field you can become a leader for this new club. The organizational leaders on the other hand help the youth officer team structure club meetings and attend 4-H council board meetings once a month.

Here at the 4-H office we will begin the search for energetic volunteers to take on this new opportunity. We will assist and train the team of new leaders and help get the club going in the right direction over the course of the next year. Through the generous donation of Renison who is committed to youth programs in Imperial County we are able to cover the costs of membership, supplies and leader training to get this club up and running. If you are interested or maybe just a little curious about what's coming up in the next few months please visit us (look for lots of green 4-H clovers) over the next two months at the following locations: Calexico Farmers Market, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and Calexico "Kiki" Camarena Library, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. May 16 (meeting for new volunteers.)

There will be plenty of ways to get involved and support this new and exciting opportunity. You can join as a member or leader, spread the word, donate, or volunteer to help with the organizational process.

Beginning this month through September the UCCE-Imperial County 4-H Youth Development program will be looking for youth and adults to establish a club charter, recruit adult volunteers and youth members, train new volunteers, buy equipment and leaders' kits, host a large kickoff party, and reach out to the community to create a sustainable 4-H Club in Calexico. Please contact the UCCE-Imperial County 4-H Office for information. Shanna Abatti may be reached via email at sabatti@ucanr.edu or phone 760-352-9474.




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