



## OUR EXPERIENCE WITH 4H

By Laura Nolette

I remember hearing of 4H when I was a kid in Virginia. We lived in a resort town – quite the suburb – not at all rural. I only heard of kids in the rural counties of the state doing 4H. You know that type – Future Farmers of America. I naturally thought that 4H was about that kind of stuff – things for farmers' kids. What did I know?

When I came to Florida and started working with Meredith on homeschooling our children, she talked to me about 4H. She told me how her kids enjoyed learning all kinds of skills through the program. She took me to the offices so that I could look at the project books they had available. I was in love. The kids could learn about wildlife conservation, marine biology, the creation and repair of small engines, cooking, sewing, woodworking, and so much more. I couldn't wait to sign up.

We then decided to combine our co-op with a 4H club, which we would form. It really was an action born of desperation; we didn't know where to have the co-op meet. The idea was that we would have a weekly 4H club and it would include the subjects we wished to cover in the co-op. Our co-op does not take the place of homeschooling our kids. It offers supplemental classes. We love the arts, PE, Spanish, and science – things that work the best in a group setting.

4H was wonderful for this. We learned about meeting procedures, club officers as well as our class material. Because we met weekly instead of the typical monthly 4H meeting, we rotated our officers every month or so. The facility provided us with two rooms to use for classrooms, a stage and even a kitchen.

We taught about anatomy, marine science, art and Spanish from the classrooms. We had cooking lessons in the kitchen. We also conducted chorus and drama classes on the stage. The kids learned how to cook crackers, cookies, sweet breads, funnel cake, peanut butter balls, tacos and so many other lunch and snack items I can't name them all. The project books available gave us so many ideas for art classes that we had more options than days.

One of my sons was already learning about woodworking from my dad, so we picked up a project book which directed their “class” time very neatly. He and Dad built some really nice wood items that year, including a couple of Adirondack chairs, a coffee table and a hinged wood birthday card for me.

We’re hoping to start the 4H co-op again. Our teenagers can be of great assistance now and there are always new young people wanting to join in the fun. Maybe this year we’ll go to the fair and win even more ribbons and prizes.