September 18, 2009

Dear 4-H Family,

This past year has included both budget triumphs and budget woes for 4-H. Our county budget is in good shape, thanks to the passage of the OSU Extension Service and 4-H special district in November of 2008. This new district will levy a tax specifically for the local support of our programs. It will first be collected this November, and our 2009-2010 county budget includes an increase in services for 4-H families. For example, the Extension office is now open five days a week and during the lunch hour. We are also starting the hiring process for a new 4-H agent who will take over part of the club program.

Unfortunately, the state budget has not fared so well. Due to the depressed economy, the state legislature was forced to decrease funding for nearly all programs, including the Extension Service. The Oregon 4-H Program is losing at least 15% of its funding for the next two years. In order to keep as many services and county faculty as possible, the state office will be charging a participation fee to all 4-H cub members, beginning this Fall.

The participation fee will be $15 per member, and will increase to $20 for members that enroll after January 15. There is a family cap of $30 (or $40 for those enrolling later). This is a flat fee, not a per project fee. There is no charge for volunteers.

We know that this is a difficult time financially for many of our families, and so we have changed our county fee structure to help ease the burden. We will now charge a $10 participation fee per member, not a fee for each project. We will use the same family cap as the state, so we will not charge families more than $20 in county participation fees. At the same time, we will start paying for accident insurance for all club members and leaders, since we know that so many families are struggling with rising health care costs.

Many of you will pay more in participation fees for enrolling in 4-H this year. Some of you will pay less. Everyone will get the extra benefit of insurance. We hope that the changes in our county fee will help make the transition to a state fee more affordable.

We have enclosed some additional information to help explain the reasons for the fee changes and how collection of the fees will work. The Frequently Asked Questions sheet will give you more information about the fees. We have also enclosed our latest version of our Enrollment Policies, which have been revised to reflect the new procedure. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to call us at 503-655-8635 or contact us by email – Kelly Redwine, 4-H secretary at kelly.redwine@oregonstate.edu or Wendy Hein, 4-H agent at wendy.hein@oregonstate.edu.

Sincerely,

Wendy Hein
OSU Extension Agent
4-H Youth Development