

Abstract

Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs are a relatively new component within the 4-H organization. SPIN Clubs are different from normal community clubs which focus on many project areas compared to SPIN Clubs which focus on one specific topic. The state of Illinois is dedicated to creating additional SPIN Clubs in an effort to increase statewide youth membership. While interest in 4-H SPIN Clubs has developed quickly in Illinois, the need for additional volunteers continues to grow. The objective of this research was to identify new recruitment and retention techniques for Illinois 4-H SPIN Clubs.

The research was conducted using an online survey tool called Qualtrics. A survey was sent to 144 SPIN Club volunteers with the assistance of a 4-H Youth Development Extension Specialist and 4-H youth development educators. To effectively recruit new volunteers, responses indicated it was imperative that 4-H staff interact with local and corporate businesses, organizations, and citizens. Statewide and local SPIN Club recruitment informational packets should also be used to assist the 4-H staff when recruiting new volunteers. Survey results consistently showed that volunteers were underprepared prior to the beginning of their service. To help new volunteers better understand SPIN Clubs, a statewide training program should be implemented that can be tailored to meet the needs of each unit. While numerous youth development topics could be discussed at each training program, the author recommends that SPIN Club volunteer expectations and youth training methods be of highest importance.

To further improve the retention of volunteers, survey results indicated the need for regular follow-up communication between the volunteers and 4-H staff. In summary, SPIN Club volunteers were found to genuinely enjoy watching youth grow and develop;

greater recruitment and retention is possible with improved statewide training, informational SPIN Club packets, and more efficient communication.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Need for the Study

Throughout the United States more than six million youth are participating in the nation's largest youth development organization (National 4-H Organization, n.d.). Whether they live in a large city or on a farm in the country, the youth involved in 4-H are learning many skills to better prepare them for the future through participation in 4-H programming.

In the past, youth who lived on farms joined a 4-H club to learn more about animals and crops. Today, that has changed in many ways. Youth can be involved in 4-H even if they have never stepped foot on a farm or if they currently live in a city of millions. This is all thanks in great part to the 4-H educators who have developed new ways to encourage greater youth involvement, through activities including after-school programs, school clubs, military 4-H clubs, independent clubs, and even special interest clubs.

Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs are a relatively new component within the 4-H organization. These SPIN Clubs are different from the normal community clubs as they meet for a minimum of six sessions, have a defined timeline, focus on a specific topic not typically offered through community 4-H clubs, and help youth master new and exciting lifelong skills (Weese, 2012). These clubs are organized by volunteers who have expertise in the specific area. Volunteers take time out of their day to teach youth the abilities needed to excel in these areas. Some examples of SPIN Clubs include but are not limited to: scrapbooking, robotics, archery, and model airplanes. Many youth who participate in SPIN Clubs go on to join a community club and further enjoy the benefits of 4-H membership.

The state of Illinois has proceeded in creating more SPIN Clubs in an effort to increase statewide youth membership. While the primary goal is participation in a 4-H community club, volunteers believe positive initial experiences in a SPIN Club may ultimately lead to community club membership. Weese (2012) reported between 2009 and 2010, 71 new SPIN Clubs were created in Illinois with an additional 130 SPIN Clubs formed the following year. This initial success was the start of a larger movement; over the past two years, youth membership enrollment in SPIN Clubs has increased from 773 members in 2009-2010 to 1,061 members in 2010-2011. Of these youth members, 50% were new to 4-H. This exponential membership increase occurred while adult volunteers of SPIN Clubs had increased from 132 volunteers during 2009-2010 to 190 adult volunteers one year later. During these two years, 54% of the adult volunteers were new to the organization (Weese, 2012).

Volunteers are an important resource within 4-H. They are the backbone of trust and leadership for families who look for help on projects and to sign up for events within 4-H. These volunteers are at the forefront of teaching youth individual and group learning skills through 4-H opportunities (Smith & Finley, 2004). Although there are over 540,000 volunteers within the 4-H organization today (National 4-H Organization, n.d.), a recent survey suggests that the state of Illinois supports approximately 20,401 adult volunteers (REEIS, 2012). While this number is certainly noteworthy, additional adult volunteers are needed to further educate and inspire a growing youth population.

Statement of Problem

While interest in 4-H SPIN Clubs has grown quickly within the state of Illinois, the need to recruit new volunteers and retain current volunteers for 4-H SPIN Clubs

continues to grow. Meanwhile, SPIN Clubs allow 4-H to reach out to new or underserved youth who are not currently 4-H members and volunteers need to be recruited to focus on these areas. In this study, the target audience was current 4-H SPIN Club volunteers because of their working knowledge of 4-H SPIN Clubs and potential feedback based on past experience.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine successful recruitment and retention techniques to keep volunteers and leaders actively involved in Special Interest Clubs. Throughout the state of Illinois, 4-H staff is continually developing SPIN Clubs for interested youth. Many times, finding volunteers to lead these clubs is the responsibility of 4-H staff. These volunteers come from within the local community and give up their own time to teach their skills to youth. It can be challenging to find leaders who have an open schedule, especially when considering the level of activity in the American lifestyle.

This is where recruitment and retention become important. It is critical to generate excitement through recruitment to not only promote to community members that volunteering is important, but also that it can be something they already know and enjoy. Once the volunteer has been “snagged,” an effective retention technique is vital to keep them interested in their volunteer position. This is important because after a volunteer loses interest, the challenge associated with encouraging additional volunteer work is difficult to overcome.

The recruitment and retention techniques discovered within this study will be used to help increase new adult participation while retaining those currently active. Furthermore,

study findings may help statewide 4-H youth development educators and program coordinators with SPIN Club organization.

Objectives

The following four research objectives were designed to address critical knowledge gaps regarding Illinois 4-H and SPIN Club Organizations:

1. What are the key advantages and disadvantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer?
2. What types of strategies work best to recruit volunteers for 4-H SPIN Clubs?
3. What types of retention strategies are needed to retain 4-H SPIN Club volunteers?
4. How can 4-H staff better serve SPIN Club volunteers?

Additional background information was needed to help establish a basis for the research including length of time as a SPIN Club volunteer, type of SPIN Club, other involvement in 4-H and current levels of 4-H and positive youth development knowledge.

The overall goal was to compile information about the recruitment and retention of 4-H SPIN Club volunteers. The intent is to have participants feel comfortable when expressing their true opinions on this matter and so information can be used to better recruit and retain current 4-H SPIN Club volunteers.

Definitions

4-H SPIN (Special Interest) Clubs: For the purpose of this study, a 4-H SPIN Club is a program offered through 4-H which targets new and/or underserved youth that are not currently involved in traditional 4-H programming. 4-H SPIN Clubs meet for at least six sessions and allow youth to explore a topic of interest. These clubs are led by screened 4-H volunteers from the community.

4-H SPIN Club Volunteer: For the purpose of this study, a 4-H SPIN Club Volunteer is a community member who is interested in sharing their skills from a specific area with youth. Generally, these 4-H SPIN Club volunteers are required to participate in a screening process and training program before volunteering and working with youth.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions are made:

1. This study addresses only 4-H SPIN Club volunteers within the state of Illinois.
2. Participants will answer all questions honestly and without bias.
3. Participants will have internet and email access.
4. The answers provided by participants will reflect their true opinions on the subject.

Limitations

For the purpose of this study, it is important to note the following limitations:

1. Data collection was limited to 4-H SPIN Club volunteers within the state of Illinois from units with six or more current SPIN Clubs.
2. Data collection was limited to the 4-H SPIN Club volunteers that responded to the online survey.
3. Data collection from respondents was limited to the emails sent out by their county director or 4-H youth development educator.
4. Data collection was limited based on how the respondents interpreted the terms and questions used in the survey.

Chapter II – Review of Literature

What is 4-H?

Throughout the nation, 3,500 professionals, 540,000 volunteers, and more than 60 million alumni support the 4-H program which helps to shape our future leaders (National 4-H Organization, n.d.). Youth involved in 4-H participate in an organization where the main focus is positive youth development. Positive youth development helps youth set personal goals and practice self-determination through results-driven educational opportunities and experiences (USDA, 2012). These opportunities and experiences allow youth to develop skills to help them become better citizens in their own community and make the world a better place.

The 4-H Organization originated in the early 1900's as a "four-square education" to facilitate learning and engage youth in the work of their community through the Cooperative Extension Service (4-H National Headquarters, n.d.). This "four-square education" directly refers to the four H's you can find on the 4-H emblem of the four leaf clover. These H's stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health; the four values members strive to improve by participating in educational and engaging programs (National 4-H Organization, n.d.).

4-H members participate in an array of activities through involvement in a 4-H club. A 4-H club is an organized group containing a minimum of five youth from three different families who meet regularly with adult volunteers or staff in a long-term commitment to provide a series of educational experiences (4-H National Headquarters, n.d.). Members must be at least 8 years old and not exceed the age of 21 at the national level (4-H National Headquarters, n.d.). While this maximum age of 4-H participation

varies among states, the state of Illinois prohibits active participation after eighteen years of age (University of Illinois Extension, 2012).

The most common type of 4-H club is a community club. They regularly meet a minimum of six times per year and are supplemented with project meetings, camps, fairs, and other 4-H learning activities. Youth select officers to lead the club and can meet at any location convenient for the club members. Community clubs have members who participate in a variety of 4-H projects which are advised by leaders and volunteers. 4-H projects are hands-on learning opportunities for students to gain knowledge and develop leadership skills in real life settings which can range in complexity and topic, from cooking and woodworking to even raising dairy cattle.

What is a 4-H SPIN Club?

4-H Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs focus on an individual, specific topic. This is different than 4-H community clubs where the members choose their own project and work on this project at home with help from volunteers, parents, and 4-H workshops. In some respects, however, SPIN Clubs share similarities with community clubs. These similarities include meeting for a minimum of six sessions, engaging youth in experiential exploration of topics, and being led by an adult volunteer. The main difference between SPIN Clubs and community clubs is that SPIN Clubs focus on a single topic of interest, have a defined timeline, and use hands-on experiences to build skills in the specific area of interest (Weese, 2012).

SPIN Clubs encourage youth to master skills which are most interesting to them. Not only do youth develop skills which they may use the rest of their lives but they are allowed to showcase their developed skills at a cumulating event. The potential skill sets

learned are virtually unlimited, but could include learning how to use a measuring cup for cooking, using math to figure out how to build a bird house, or even practicing proper safety precautions when handling a bow and arrow. Many times youth will challenge their creativity when making a project like sewing an article of clothing and then, at the end of the SPIN Club, they present their hard work at a fashion review. Another example include youth who learn the skills needed to cook a meal and then the culminating event might be an entire meal cooked for their families highlighting these learned skills.

SPIN Clubs are built upon the framework of positive youth development. This allows youth to connect with caring adults and peers and encourage independence and teamwork. Because all youth learn at differently, those who understand this challenge have a better chance of becoming a more successful peer leader.

SPIN Clubs are not simply another educational opportunity for youth already involved in 4-H, instead they target new and underrepresented audiences not typically part of a 4-H club. SPIN Clubs provide these youth with knowledge about 4-H to assist them in taking the next step to become involved as a full 4-H member and participate in other activities outside of the SPIN Club.

It has been common in recent years to see youth involved in 4-H drop out of a community club while in junior high and high school (1998). This has been very concerning to parents, leaders, and 4-H educators. Several studies have been conducted to better understand the needs of 4-H members, specifically for those during these stages. One such study by Cathy Butler and Janette Bowman (Butler & Bowman, 1998) evaluated the program topics of most interest to junior high and high school students. In this study, a survey questionnaire was handed out to 4-H leaders at four junior high and

high schools in Ouachita Parish in Louisiana. These surveys were administered during classes and 4-H meetings and asked youth to rank their top seven interests and non-interests. The sampled population included 47 4-H members and 67 non-members.

This survey showed that coping with unemployment was the most important factor for both 4-H members and non-members (Butler & Bowman, 1998). Other important topics included fashion, fitness, self-esteem, and teen pregnancy, all which are generally not part of a traditional 4-H community program. As a result, the findings of the study were used to improve the 4-H curriculum. A study like this was critical to identifying areas 4-H could focus on to retain membership at the junior high and high school levels. These results also indicated an opportunity for programs like SPIN Clubs, which could be designed to address specific topics with a limited investment of personal time.

Adult Volunteers in the 4-H Organization

Adult volunteers play an important role within any 4-H organization. Many are leaders of clubs while others perform behind-the-scenes work for 4-H events including fairs and meetings. While research in 4-H community clubs is extensive, there is little research related specifically to the different needs within SPIN Clubs. New studies related to 4-H community clubs are still valuable, however, such as a study conducted by a team of North Central Region 4-H Volunteer Specialists which focused on the North Central Region 4-H Volunteers within 12 different states (Nippolt, Pleskac, Schwartz & Swanson, 2012). This study was piloted at the 2007 North Central Region Volunteer Forum in Wisconsin, with the purpose of documenting volunteer contributions to 4-H organizations and to create awareness of the types and level of contributions made by volunteers for 4-H and Extension.

Within each state, 800 individuals were randomly selected to participate in the survey. Over 3,300 surveys were returned within the eleven participating states. The data was analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and key findings found that the majority of respondents were between the ages of 32 and 51 years of age. Most respondents were found to be a project leader or in an administrative related role in the club. Interestingly, all respondents had a high school diploma while nearly one-third held a bachelor's degree suggesting that 4-H volunteers who work with youth are well-educated. Although the median number of service years was eight, the majority of respondents volunteered for only one to five, implying that improved retention strategies would be of clear benefit (Nippolt, Pleskac, Schwartz & Swanson, 2012).

Additional results of this survey discovered that volunteers were more active in programming during the summer months and enjoyed the opportunity to influence youth by helping them improve leadership skills. Most importantly, the survey identified unique characteristics of the current volunteer base within the 4-H organization. Two groups were found to be primarily responsible in terms of youth volunteer support: young adults just entering college and adults who were headed into retirement (Nippolt, Pleskac, Schwartz & Swanson, 2012). These potential age groups must be an area of emphasis for SPIN Clubs to identify key leaders for teaching important skills to our youth.

The quality of a relationship between a 4-H volunteer and member is critical in ensuring that youth skills and competencies are developed throughout the 4-H program (Radhakrishna & Ewing, 2011). The objective of a study completed at Pennsylvania State University, therefore, was designed to assess the correlation between volunteer leader competencies and learned life skills for youth members (Radhakrishna & Ewing, 2011).

Specifically, this study was administered to 4-H volunteers within the state of Pennsylvania.

Over three-quarters of the volunteers who participated were female and over one-half of participants held a bachelor's degree; consistent with the educational findings from Nippolt, Pleskac, Schwartz & Swanson (2012). Furthermore, greater than three-quarters of the survey participants were from rural areas with the majority (>50%) originally involved in 4-H as a youth member.

Participants also answered questions based on their perceptions of life skills youth learned while in 4-H. The results indicated that many skills were learned, namely, self-esteem, self-confidence, responsibility, communication, and relationship building skills (Radhakrishna & Ewing, 2011). Respondents also discussed their own competencies while volunteering in 4-H. Volunteers viewed themselves as 'good' to 'very good' when teaching competencies related to supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, providing appropriate structure, and opportunities for skill development. Of all evaluated competencies, volunteers ranked 'very high' when providing a facility which was safe for 4-H activities.

An additional important finding in this study was that 4-H youth improved valuable life skills due to the positive relationship and competencies developed with the assistance of 4-H volunteers. A major challenge, however, is that the consistent changes in youth teaching methods requires up-to-date training and informational resources to ensure effective educational practices are available to all. Therefore, better understanding the needs of our leaders is essential to retain our most valuable resource, our 4-H volunteers.

Recruitment of Adult 4-H Volunteers

Finding adult volunteers for 4-H or any organization can be challenging; individuals are often pulled in the direction of family and work before even considering volunteering. The objective of a study by Sanford Smith and James Finley of Pennsylvania (2004) was to identify better methods recruiting additional volunteers for their 4-H events. This study, completed using a two-phase approach, was conducted during the spring and fall of 1999. During phase one, 4-H agents throughout 67 counties in Pennsylvania were surveyed. The second phase, in the fall of 1999, consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted among 41 randomly selected participants currently leading natural resources projects.

The 4-H agents interviewed reported that 3.2% of their 10,079 adult volunteers were involved in natural resources projects (Smith & Finley, 2004). As expected, the most common attributes of these specific volunteers included traits such as a strong interest in the environment or outdoors, were parents of children involved, were involved in outdoor sports, past teachers with an interest in the environment, and obtained a post-secondary education. An additional question discovered several innovative ideas which could be implemented to attract more volunteers: explore contacts with the Natural Resources Agencies and the Environmental Education Centers, make direct requests to 4-H parents, train existing 4-H volunteers, reach out to teachers, and increase adult involvement at 4-H day camps.

With this knowledge they then interviewed the current natural resource leaders and discovered that the interest in teaching youth and the organizational aspect of 4-H actually attracted them to volunteering (Smith & Finley, 2004). When asked who would make good volunteers for 4-H natural resources projects they said adults interested in outdoors, natural resources professionals, hunters and anglers, and 4-H parents/potential

4-H parents, suggesting that community experts are ideal leaders for 4-H SPIN Clubs. Another important finding of this study was that most volunteers had issues with previous time commitments (e.g., helping out another youth organization) and felt slightly intimidated with leading a group (Smith & Finley, 2004).

This study provided additional insight as to who should be targeted when looking for volunteers of 4-H SPIN Clubs. This data suggests that, in an effort to recruit well-educated and excited volunteers, a first step would be to check with local businesses within the area of specialization. Furthermore, the study mentioned the importance of using parents as critical resources (Smith & Finley, 2004). A possible recruitment strategy, therefore, might be to highlight the many advantages of being a leader but also inform them that additional support is always available.

Another recruitment method could involve the use of volunteer recruitment packets. The 2003 Kentucky Volunteer Administration Academy developed a volunteer recruitment packet as a tool to be used by Extension professionals, staff, and volunteers (Culp III, Aldenderfer, Allen, Fannin-Holliday, Ford & Goodwin, 2006). These types of packets may be a more effective way to promote 4-H and inform potential volunteers about the opportunities available to them. Examples of common promotional tools used in volunteer packets include: brochures to outline county and state programs, position vacancies, thank you letters, volunteer applications, behavioral expectation guidelines, and interest inventories (Culp III, Aldenderfer, Allen, Fannin-Holliday, Ford & Goodwin, 2006). These packets typically help to provide a potential volunteer with all of the information needed to decide whether they should proceed in becoming a volunteer.

Recruitment packets can also be customized to showcase the specific programming needs within a county. Material customization may include position descriptions, purpose, location, time, responsibilities, and the Extension contact information. In this study by Culp III, Aldenderfer, Allen, Fannin-Holliday, Ford & Goodwin (2006) Kentucky participants customized recruitment packets to include the positions of the school's club leader, community club leader, 4-H project leader, and many other positions.

Distribution of the recruitment packets, however, has been problematic. Many county extension offices may not have the monetary needs to mail packets, so finding creative ways to spread this information is often the best way to get packets to potential volunteers. For example, packets in Kentucky were provided to a 4-H Council when recruiting new members, they were made available within the Extension offices in case of possible inquiries, and packets were distributed at open houses and civic organizational events/meetings (Culp III, Aldenderfer, Allen, Fannin-Holliday, Ford & Goodwin, 2006).

An additional benefit is that recruitment packets can be a very important recruitment tool when a potential volunteer is deciding among several opportunities. They also provide quick information for people who do not have the time to talk to an extension employee but would like to become involved. Volunteers can simply gain a better understanding about 4-H through these packets which can help encourage them to become a volunteer.

When recruiting volunteers it is important to know who to target and how to discuss the opportunities within 4-H such as becoming a SPIN Club volunteer. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture partnered with the National 4-H Council to complete a comprehensive study among current and prospective 4-H volunteers (2011). This study

conducted one-on-one telephone interviews with volunteer specialists, held online focus group sessions with current 4-H volunteers, and surveyed current and prospective volunteers about their personal views on volunteering.

The results of this study discovered that current and future volunteers have many similar views. For example, participants liked to volunteer for the same organizations, agreed that organizations focusing on life skills would benefit the country as a whole, and have a low familiarity with the 4-H organization when compared to other organizations. After participants learned about 4-H and the opportunities for youth and adults; the quantity of participants who would like to volunteer in 4-H increased by more than 50%. This data suggests that spreading the word about 4-H opportunities is another important factor to consider when recruiting new volunteers.

Due to the overwhelming positive results of this study, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and The National 4-H Council developed a Volunteer Engagement & Activation Resource (VEAR) program. This tool has been used by many 4-H program coordinators and educators to identify volunteers for recruitment. The VEAR program categorizes people into different areas based on their background information; example categories include: transformational leaders, linked ins, traditionalists, active mentors, generation next, sideliners, backgrounders, and pre-occupieds. Within each of these categories specific information was broken down regarding characteristics of the volunteer types. The information included: primary motivators, 4-H relationship, demographics, lifestyle interpretation, key messages, and touch points. The touch points included the favorites of these types of people such as community places they like to

spend their time, websites they commonly click on, television shows they watch, and magazines they read and/or receive.

The primary motivator of each category is a great way to see how 4-H staff can better relate to potential volunteers. Certain groups of people have specific motivations to become involved with youth such as transformational leaders. These types of people like to work with youth and want to be leaders or mentors for future generations. Linked ins like to share their experiences and make an impact while traditionalists enjoy working with different generations and learning new skills (The National Institute of Food and Agriculture & The National 4-H Council, 2011). The active mentors want to pass on the skills they have learned in life, and generation next want to teach skills to kids and be a mentor to them.

Other types of people may not be as interested in leading others and as a result, it is generally more difficult to recruit these volunteers. The categories of people include the sideliners, backgrounders, and the pre-occupieds. The sideliners have a primary motivator of believing that volunteering cannot open doors to new opportunities while the backgrounders are disinterested in youth organizations. Finally, the pre-occupieds dislike being involved in youth hands-on learning activities. While these types of people are routinely challenging to recruit, better understanding these groups helps to improve the chances of success when recruiting volunteers.

Overall, this study helps to recognize the different mind sets of people within our communities. It also gives 4-H educators and program coordinators new ways to address and reach out to these types to become volunteers and share their skills through 4-H and SPIN Clubs.

Retention of Adult 4-H Volunteers

As with the aforementioned research (Smith & Finley, 2004; Nippolt, Pleskac, Schwartz & Swanson, 2012), most volunteers find it difficult to balance home and work life in addition to volunteering. Many volunteers may not realize this early on, but after volunteering for a few months, they lose the initial energy and excitement. Retention of 4-H adult leaders is critical to assure volunteers that they are needed and there are people who support them. A study conducted by Culp and Schwartz (1999) of Ohio highlighted several positive and negative motivators for volunteers that continue contributing their time to 4-H. Specifically, the study evaluated tenured volunteers who attended the State 4-H Volunteer Recognition Banquet in 1996.

The results indicated that tenured volunteers are interested in the overall concept of 4-H as a developmental youth organization and therefore, are motivated to work with or contribute to 4-H members or their community, have a family member involved, and have a desire to share their own skills and talents. Many tenured volunteers continued their service when they can contribute to the community, give recognition to their whole club, and see individual members receive recognition for their projects. Most volunteers disliked individual recognition, instead preferring recognition for their club and/or its members (Culp & Schwartz, 1999). The author predicts that the results of this research may highlight some of these key findings but also provide insight into other key retention strategies. In an effort to retain volunteer activity in 4-H, extension agents should incorporate these techniques in addition to involving volunteers in all aspects of club planning to help ensure optimal club performance.

Retention of adult volunteers within 4-H requires continuous updates and proper leadership training (Kaslon, Lodl & Greve, 2005). Guidance throughout their time as a volunteer becomes a priority to help them not only complete their job to the best of their ability, but also reassure them their time is valued. There is a multitude of ways to maintain efficient communication, be it through training updates or 4-H office correspondence.

An action research study completed by the University of Nebraska showed how online training has developed as an acceptable method for training 4-H volunteers compared to face-to-face methods. In this study, data was collected using conference call focus groups which allowed for effective communication statewide. During the study, participants needed minimal web knowledge. The volunteer leaders in the study discussed their views of 1) online training, 2) navigating through an online training session, and 3) an overall evaluation on the training online through a period of three separate rounds. The results from this study showed that volunteers were accepting of online training as a method for learning new skills (Kaslon, Lodl & Greve, 2005).

There were many advantages and disadvantages discussed throughout the three rounds by the volunteers. Overall, however, advantages using online training largely outweighed disadvantages and routinely included: reduction of transportation and time, accessibility of information, easy to navigate, ability to network with other 4-H volunteers from throughout the state, and being able to access information whenever needed. When participants expressed discomfort with web-based training, concerns were generally related to the inaccessibility of the internet in certain locations.

Overall, the results of this study clearly demonstrated that when assisting 4-H volunteers, 4-H staff leadership and accessibility is vital. Because not all programs are held during normal business hours, having access to an internet website with training and knowledge to help answer questions is necessary for 4-H volunteers. Furthermore, many 4-H volunteers hold jobs during similar hours which make communication with a 4-H office difficult. Although not proven scientifically, the author theorizes that inadequate internet resources for trouble-shooting and problem solving is also a key contributing factor leading to poor volunteer retention.

Chapter III - Methods

This study was designed to evaluate successful recruitment and retention techniques to keep volunteers and leaders actively involved in 4-H Special Interest Clubs. The main research objectives of the study were to:

1. What are the key advantages and disadvantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer?
2. What types of methods work best to recruit volunteers for 4-H SPIN Clubs?
3. What types of retention strategies are needed to retain 4-H SPIN Club volunteers?
4. How can 4-H staff better serve SPIN Club volunteers?

The main research goals of this study were completed by working with Illinois 4-H Staff. These objectives were arranged into an online survey that was developed in collaboration with a 4-H SPIN Club staff that focused on 4-H SPIN Club volunteers. Staff members were interested in increasing the number of SPIN Clubs through improved recruitment and retention of 4-H SPIN Club volunteers. The developed survey was then reviewed and validated by the Illinois State 4-H Office staff and the Champaign County 4-H Program staff.

Within the state of Illinois, Extension programs are grouped into units. These units generally consist of two or more counties grouped together with a main county director, 4-H youth development educator, and several program coordinators who collaboratively develop programming for specific counties. Because the target audience of this research was SPIN Club volunteers throughout the state of Illinois, we focused on units with six or more current SPIN Clubs. Illinois 4-H Information Technology staff identified ten units which fit these criteria for a total of 33 participating counties. Thus, the scope of this survey was administered to 144 SPIN Clubs within these counties. After the survey was

completed and the target audience was determined, an IRB Human Subjects Research Review Protocol was completed and sent for approval along with the survey to the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Institutional Review Board. This requirement was completed before proceeding with additional research processes (approval number H2013-W008).

Since this research study was taking place outside the state of Wisconsin and involved an additional university-based program in the state of Illinois, it had to be approved by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board. After approval by the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, an IRB Application for Exemption, the survey, and the approval from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls was submitted to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board. This was carefully reviewed and approved with the IRB Protocol Number of 13491.

Upon receipt of IRB approval protocol numbers from both universities, the process of survey sendoff began. The research study was conducted using an internet-based evaluation tool created in Qualtrics. This survey can be found in Appendix B. Those previously identified as part of the target population, including SPIN Club volunteers from units with six or more SPIN Clubs, were a part of the survey.

The survey was sent with an invitation email that provided background information about the study and a link to the online survey to an Illinois State 4-H Youth Development Extension Specialist. The Illinois State 4-H Youth Development Extension Specialist then forwarded the invitation email along with directions, a consent letter for the survey, and whom the survey was targeting to the specific unit county directors and 4-

H youth development educators. This methodology was utilized to ensure participants would receive emails from a reputable source (a co-worker) and hopefully improve the participation rate. The county directors and 4-H youth development educators then forwarded the invitation email to their 4-H SPIN Club volunteers. This process further ensured anonymity. The online survey was 'open' to complete for approximately four weeks. After two weeks, a follow-up reminder about the study was sent to all 4-H SPIN Club volunteers through their unit 4-H educators and county directors. A copy of the invitation email and correspondence sent to county directors and 4-H youth development educators are located in Appendix A.

The invitation email contained information about the participant's consent to partake in the survey. An important objective of this survey was to ensure anonymity, and as a result, no signature was required by the participant. Although they were encouraged to complete the survey, participation was not required. The invitation email also stated that responding (positive or negative criticisms) would result in no adverse consequences. Anonymity also guaranteed that there was also no way to find out who did or did not participate in the survey so the reason for a follow up email to all participants was requested.

Once subjects clicked on the provided link, they were directed to the Qualtrics survey. Initially, participants were asked to answer a series of questions including basic information about the subject's gender, position title, and involvement in 4-H. These questions were asked using multiple choice and open-ended questions. Additional questions promoted subjects to give their thoughts regarding 4-H SPIN (Special Interest) Club recruitment and retention. The format for these questions was designed to include

various strategies such as multiple choice and open-ended questions to encourage self-expression.

After preliminary questions about their background, the following two sections asked subjects to provide information about their involvement in 4-H and SPIN (Special Interest) Clubs (e.g., identify current SPIN Club and their responsibilities). The latter portion of the survey was designed to gauge subjects' opinions regarding recruitment and retention techniques. Specifically, they were asked what strategies might work best with them and with other potential volunteers. Upon completion, respondents were asked to submit the survey. No additional steps were required because the responses were automatically saved in the Qualtrics system.

Of the emails sent to ten different units, including 33 counties and 144 SPIN Club volunteers, 24 volunteers completed the survey. This was a response rate of 16.6%. The Qualtrics online survey program was used to record the following data as well as summarize it using various analysis tools within Qualtrics.

Chapter IV – Results

The research survey collected and analyzed data through the use of an online survey program called Qualtrics. The research survey contained a total of 35 open-ended and multiple choice questions. All of the questions were to be answered by the participants with one exception - their response to the previous question. All participants answered as many questions as they wanted but were encouraged to complete the survey in its entirety. A summary of the results from the survey questions can be found below. In Appendix C the actual and complete answers of the survey questions can be found.

The objective of question number one was to better understand the variety of current occupations among 4-H volunteers. It asked respondents to provide a brief description because some occupations may be hard to understand by an individual title or name. A total of 17 participants answered this question; the data are summarized in Table 1. Based on the participants' responses, data were classified into nine categories. As expected, the educational field was the most common with 35.1% of the participants fitting into this category. The next largest category was tied among the engineering, marketing and sales, and science occupations with 11.8% of the participants responding per occupation area. Other occupations of the participants included agriculture, finance, health care, and law. Each of these categories contained one participant (5.9%) and clearly supports the assumption that the wealth of knowledge and background among 4-H volunteers is uniquely diverse.

Table 1. Participants' Current Occupation

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Agriculture	1	5.9%
Education	6	35.1%
Engineering	2	11.8%
Finance	1	5.9%
Health Care	1	5.9%
Law	1	5.9%
Marketing and Sales	2	11.8%
Science	2	11.8%
No Occupation	1	5.9%
17 total responses		100%

Question number two evaluated the gender of the participants, with the goal of better understanding the demographics of our participants. Of the 23 participants, nearly 61% identified themselves as females compared to only 39% of which were males (Table 2).

Table 2. Gender of Participants

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Males	9	39.1%
Females	14	60.9%
23 total responses		100%

To further understand participant demographics, the next question asked each participant to share their age. A total of 23 respondents answered the question. Based on the data (Table 3) a large majority of the participants (65.2%) were between the ages of 31 and 60 years old. A smaller amount of participants (17.4%) were between the ages of 61-80 years old and between the ages of 18-30 years old. This data clearly show most volunteers in SPIN Clubs are in their middle ages of life.

Table 3. Age of Participants

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
18-24 years of age	1	4.4%
25-30 years of age	3	13.0%
31-40 years of age	3	13.0%
41-50 years of age	8	34.8%
51-60 years of age	4	17.4%
61-70 years of age	3	13.0%
71-80 years of age	1	4.4%
81 or older	0	0%
23 total responses		100%

Question number four surveyed the area of residence for each of the participants (Table 4). Although most participants (43.5%) stated they came from a rural or small town under 10,000, others (26.1%) lived in medium-sized towns of 10,000 to 50,000 people. A small group of participants indicated they were from large cities (greater than 50,000 people), suburbs, or farms. The results descriptively illustrate the diversity of the volunteer population within 4-H SPIN Clubs.

Table 4. Participants' Location

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Farm	1	4.3%
Rural/Small Town (under 10,000)	10	43.5%
Medium Town (10,000 – 50,000)	6	26.1%
Suburb greater than 50,000	2	8.7%
City greater than 50,000	4	17.4%
23 total responses		100%

The next question shared volunteers' racial or ethnic group (Table 5). This was the last of the demographic questions to help provide additional background information. Nearly 90% of the participants stated they were Caucasian with minimal diversity from other racial/ethnic groups including African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American categories.

Table 5. Racial or Ethnic Group of Participants

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
African American (non-Hispanic)	1	4.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0%
Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	20	87.1%
Latino or Hispanic	1	4.3%
Native American or Aleut	0	0%
Other	1	4.3%
23 total responses		100%

Question number six was open-ended and designed to identify each respondent's current volunteer position. A total of 13 participants answered this question for a response rate of 56.5% (Table 6). The majority (53.8%) of the participants identified themselves as a leader compared to much smaller rates for assistants, coordinators, instructors, and volunteers.

Table 6. Current Volunteer Position of Participants

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Assistant	1	7.7%
Coordinator	2	15.4%
Instructor	1	7.7%
Leader	7	53.8%
Volunteer	2	15.4%
13 total responses		100%

To gauge the relative experience of each participant, the survey asked how many years they had been involved in SPIN Clubs. Since 4-H SPIN Clubs have only been active for about four years in Illinois, this represented the highest anticipated response value. As per Table 7, results from 22 participants confirmed the youth of the SPIN Club component of Illinois 4-H. Nearly four-fifths (~78%) of the participants indicated that

they had been active in SPIN Clubs for less than a year compared to only 22% which had been active for two or more years.

Table 7. Years of Involvement in SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Less than 6 months	10	45.5%
6 months to 1 year	7	31.8%
2 years	2	9.1%
3 years	2	9.1%
4 years	1	4.5%
22 total responses		100%

The following question further understood their participation in additional 4-H volunteer opportunities by selecting specific items which applied to them. When participants selected the “Other –Please be specific” option, they were asked to elaborate on their answer (See Appendix C for further details on this question). A total of 22 responses were obtained from the 14 participants (Table 8). Approximately one-fourth of all surveyed were active as a 4-H Fair Volunteer, as a Community Club Leader, and as an Activity/Project Leader. Other, less common activities included Community Club Volunteer, 4-H Camp Volunteer, and 4-H Committee Volunteer which suggest that these are less effective sources from which SPIN Club volunteers could be identified.

Table 8. Other 4-H Volunteer Opportunities Completed

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Activity/Project Leader	4	18.2%
Community Club Leader	5	22.7%
Community Club Volunteer	2	9.1%
4-H Camp Volunteer	0	0%
4-H Committee Volunteer	3	13.6%
4-H Fair Volunteer	6	27.3%
Other	2	9.1%
22 total responses from 14 participants		100%

Although a prior question quantified years of participation only within the SPIN Club component of 4-H, it was also important to establish the length each participant has volunteered in 4-H as a whole. Therefore, this question was designed to ascertain whether or not the SPIN Club volunteers were previously involved in 4-H or were recently introduced to the 4-H program. Among those responding, almost 60% identified themselves as being active as a 4-H volunteer for less than a year (Table 9). This clearly demonstrates that the 4-H SPIN Club program is targeting and receiving new volunteers into the 4-H program. Contrary to the results of Table 7, however, the distribution of responses suggests that some volunteers were quite experienced. Approximately two-fifths had volunteered for at least one to five years; some of which indicated that they had been active for much longer (Table 9).

Table 9. Years as a 4-H Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Less than 1 year	13	59.1%
1-5 years	6	27.3%
6-10 years	2	9.1%
11-20 years	1	4.5%
21-30 years	0	0%
30 years or more	0	0%
22 total responses		100%

The level of experience in any organization, especially 4-H, is sometimes correlated with the level of confidence in and knowledge of an activity. The following question asked participants to rate their knowledge of the 4-H program, on a scale from extremely knowledgeable to not at all (Table 10). The vast majority of participants rated their knowledge of 4-H as very, moderately, and slightly. Presumably the most experienced and inexperienced volunteers rated their knowledge level at extremely and not at all, respectively and suggest there are diverse levels of understanding of 4-H but most participants had a basic idea of the organization.

Table 10. Participants' Knowledge of 4-H

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Extremely	2	9.1%
Very	6	27.3%
Moderately	6	27.3%
Slightly	6	27.3%
Not at all	2	9.0%
22 total responses		100%

To further assess the knowledge level of each respondent, they were asked to rate their knowledge of positive youth development in the 4-H program. Positive youth development is the foundation for all programs within 4-H, and as such, it is critical to have an accurate understanding of current volunteer capabilities. Of the 22 participants

who answered this question, almost three-fourths described their knowledge level as moderate or greater (Table 11). Furthermore, only two responses indicated that they had no knowledge of positive youth development. Collectively, these results show that Illinois 4-H SPIN Club volunteers are generally confident and knowledgeable as it relates to positive youth development.

Table 11. Participants’ Knowledge of Positive Youth Development

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Extremely	6	27.3%
Very	6	27.3%
Moderately	4	18.2%
Slightly	4	18.2%
Not at all	2	9.0%
22 total responses		100%

Question number twelve asked the participants to provide a brief description of the SPIN Club they currently volunteer with. This was the beginning of a series of questions focused on finding out more about the participants’ specific SPIN Club. This was an open-ended question which helped to provide a broad array of answers but also allow volunteers to be specific about the type of SPIN Club they participate in as a volunteer. A total of 19 participants answered this question and the answers are summarized in Table 12. There were many diverse SPIN Clubs described which included a range of activities and areas of expertise required for each individual leader. Although the most common SPIN Clubs were robotics, sewing, and shooting sports, it was readily apparent that other topics were equally important. The different SPIN Clubs listed by each participant clearly illustrate the diversity among possible SPIN Clubs topics.

Table 12. Current SPIN Club Description

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Baking	1	5.3%
Cooking	1	5.3%
Electricity	1	5.3%
Gardening	1	5.3%
Robotics	6	31.4%
Sewing	3	15.8%
Shooting Sports	3	15.8%
Other	3	15.8%
19 total responses		100%

Question number thirteen asked participants to describe their role in the SPIN Club they listed in the previous question. This was another open-ended, self-descriptive question designed to not limit the number of potential options for each participant and as a result, there were many ways to respond to this question. Table 13 summarizes the responses from each of the 19 participants. Most participants (42.0%) recognized their role as a leader within their SPIN Club. Other, responses included similar types of roles such as an instructor, mentor, and teacher, each receiving response rates of approximately 10% each.

Table 13. Participants' Role in SPIN Club

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Assistant	1	5.3%
Coach	1	5.3%
Instructor	2	10.5%
Leader	8	42.0%
Mentor	2	10.5%
Provide Support	1	5.3%
Teacher	2	10.5%
Volunteer	1	5.3%
Unsure	1	5.3%
19 total responses		100%

Question number fourteen asked the participants to provide the school grade level for the members of their SPIN Club. Participants were allowed to select all answers which applied to their SPIN Club, which typically ranged from 3rd grade to 12th grade (the grade level 4-H members must be in order to participate in 4-H). 19 participants answered this question for a total of 79 responses as described in Table 14. The results followed a classic bell-shaped curve, with the most SPIN Club participants during the middle school ages (grades 5 to 10) and declining numbers at the high school (grades 11 to 12) and elementary (grades 3 to 4) levels.

Table 14. Grade in School of the SPIN Club Participants

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
3 rd Grade	7	8.9%
4 th Grade	7	8.9%
5 th Grade	9	11.5%
6 th Grade	8	10.1%
7 th Grade	11	13.9%
8 th Grade	11	13.9%
9 th Grade	8	10.1%
10 th Grade	8	10.1%
11 th Grade	5	6.3%
12 th Grade	5	6.3%
79 total responses from 19 participants		100%

To understand in greater detail the intricacies of each SPIN Club, question number fifteen asked participants to list how many members were involved in their SPIN Club. Because each SPIN Club must contain a minimum of five members, possible options ranged from five to greater than 31 (Table 15). This question showed that while only one-third of SPIN Clubs contained 5 to 10 members, the overwhelming majority contained club membership of greater than 10 (some of which were greater than 30). The wide range of responses is likely related to the flexibility SPIN Club volunteers have in

choosing the allowed number of members for each club (based on the club’s activities and how many other volunteers they may have).

Table 15. Number of Members Involved in SPIN Club

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
5-10	6	31.6%
11-15	4	21.1%
16-20	5	26.3%
21-30	2	10.5%
31 or more	2	10.5%
19 total responses		100%

In question number sixteen, participants shared the frequency of SPIN Club meetings. There is no requirement of how often a SPIN Club must meet as long as it totals at least six meetings. Answers to this question contained specific multiple-choice answers ranging from once a month to two or more times a week. There was also an “Other-Please be specific” question which allowed participants to explain more about how often their club meets if it was not listed as an option (Table 16). Although the most common response was weekly meetings (31.5%), approximately 26% chose “other” as their answer. These “other” answers included: meeting daily in January and February and then about twice a week after that; four to five meetings a year with six events; three times a week or more during a build season and then monthly in the off season; and meeting six times a year.

Table 16. How Often Participants' SPIN Clubs Meet

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Once a month	1	5.3%
Twice a month	4	21.1%
Three times a month	0	0.0%
Weekly	6	31.5%
Two or more times a week	3	15.8%
Other	5	26.3%
19 total responses		100%

Question number seventeen asked participants to list the time of year their club meets because some types of SPIN Clubs have season-specific activities. Of the 19 participants to answer this question, responses ranged considerably in meeting frequency (Table 17). It was apparent that most SPIN Clubs primarily met year-round (31.6%) or during the school year (26.3%). The remainder of participants meet during specific seasons of the year (e.g., winter, spring, fall, etc.).

Table 17. Time of Year SPIN Club Meets

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Winter	4	21.1%
Spring	2	10.5%
Summer	0	0.0%
Fall	2	10.5%
During the school year	5	26.3%
All year	6	31.6%
19 total responses		100%

An important question, especially as it relates to recruitment and effective development of promotional materials, was to understand the key advantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer. Therefore, an open-ended question was developed which allowed participants to list their advantages specifically. Table 18 summarizes each response from the 17 participants. The most frequent advantages were working with youth (19.4%) and

preparing youth for the future (19.4%). Five participants (16.0%) also said support from 4-H was an advantage while four participants (12.9%) said giving back to the community was important. Many additional advantages were identified, each as important as the previous. In short, this lengthy list of advantages would suggest that many volunteers want to give back to the community, so having a chance to work with youth to complete this task makes their commitment a key advantage.

Table 18. Two Advantages of Being a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Prepare youth for the future	6	19.4%
Working with youth	6	19.4%
Support from 4-H	5	16.0%
Give back to the community	4	12.9%
Excitement of youth	3	9.7%
Learn something new	2	6.5%
Share knowledge with youth	2	6.5%
Focus on a specific topic	1	3.2%
One on one assistance	1	3.2%
Show what 4-H is about	1	3.2%
31 total responses from 17 participants		100%

On the contrary, it is critical to address the challenges of such activities. This was once again an open-ended question which allowed participants to voice their opinions about the disadvantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer (Table 19). Almost one-half of participants stated that finding free-time was challenging, especially as a SPIN Club volunteer. Other participants, almost 40%, stated that they actually had no disadvantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer and simply enjoyed being a volunteer.

Table 19. Disadvantages of Being a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Time	7	43.6%
No disadvantages	6	37.5%
A lot of forms	1	6.3%
A lot to learn	1	6.3%
Unsure of expectations	1	6.3%
16 total responses		100%

Question twenty asked participants to rate their knowledge of SPIN Clubs on a scale from extremely knowledgeable to not at all. The results from the 20 participants who answered this question are shown in Table 20. The distribution of responses for this question also followed a bell-shaped curve, with most participants considering themselves moderately knowledgeable.

Table 20. Participants' Knowledge of SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Extremely	0	0%
Very	4	20%
Moderately	8	40%
Slightly	6	30%
Not at all	2	10%
20 total responses		100%

To understand how participants were recruited into their current SPIN Club volunteer positions, an open-ended question was developed to obtain the results. A total of 17 participants responded (Table 21). There are many reasons participants became a volunteer but the most common were to expand knowledge of youth in specific areas of interest with 23.6% of the participants responding. Other main reasons included being a positive influence (17.6%), inspiring youth in specific areas (17.6%), 4-H helped to form their club (17.6%), being asked to volunteer (11.8%) and other reasons (11.8%). These

other reasons included being a part of their job and being a lifetime rifle coach and competitor.

Table 21. Reason Participants are Involved in SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Expand knowledge of youth in specific areas	4	23.6%
Be a positive influence	3	17.6%
Inspire youth in specific areas	3	17.6%
4-H helped club form	3	17.6%
Asked to volunteer	2	11.8%
Other	2	11.8%
17 total responses		100%

An additional recruitment related topic was to understand how participants initially learned about 4-H SPIN Clubs, the topic of question twenty two. As outlined in Table 22, the most common way participants learned about SPIN Clubs was through their 4-H program coordinators and clubs with 11 of 18 participants responding with this answer. Other methods included: their organizational involvement encouraged them to become a SPIN Club volunteer, email, recommendation, school, word of mouth, and work.

Table 22. How Participants Learned about SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
4-H program coordinators and clubs	11	61.0%
Organizational involvement	2	11.0%
Email	1	5.6%
Recommendation	1	5.6%
School	1	5.6%
Word of mouth	1	5.6%
Work	1	5.6%
18 total responses		100%

The objective of question twenty three was to elucidate the most important factors that motivated them to become a SPIN Club volunteer. As with previously modeled questions, this was also open-ended which allowed them to rank factors as the 1st most important, 2nd most important and 3rd most important. As such, responses were divided into Table 23 A, Table 23 B, and Table 24 C, respectively.

The primary motivators for survey participants, based on 17 responses, was to help satisfy youth and community needs (29%) and to help youth (24%) (Table 23 A). Although other responses included personal reasons for volunteering (e.g., broaden and share skills, promote specific topics I enjoy), responses included a wide mix. Two responses specified “other” motivators, which included: having their own children participate in the club and not wanting to become overwhelmed in all that 4-H offers for a community club.

Table 23 A. Participants’ 1st Most Important Factor Motivating them to become a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Community and youth need	5	29.3%
Youth	4	23.5%
Broaden and share my skills	2	11.8%
Good programs and access to events	2	11.8%
Other	2	11.8%
Promote specific activities I enjoy	2	11.8%
17 total responses		100%

The second most important factor motivating participants to become a SPIN Club volunteer appeared to be more based on personal reasons (promotion of specific activities I enjoy, 35.3%). This question was answered by 17 participants. Other second most

important factors included good programs and access to events (29.4%), youth (17.6%) community and youth need (11.8), and broadening and sharing their skills (5.9%).

Table 23 B. Participants' 2nd Most Important Factor Motivating them to become a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Promote specific activities I enjoy	6	35.3%
Good programs and access to events	5	29.4%
Youth	3	17.6%
Community and youth need	2	11.8%
Broaden and share my skills	1	5.9%
Other	0	0%
17 total responses		100%

Participants' 3rd most important factor motivating them to become a SPIN Club volunteer was answered by fourteen participants. The top motivator was other (28.6%), with motivators including networking, sounded fun, working with others, and insuring instruction was safely managed. Participants stated broadening and sharing skills (21.4%), good programs and access to events (21.4%), community and youth need (14.3%), and youth (14.3%) as their third most important motivating factors.

Table 23 C. Participants' 3rd Most Important Factor Motivating them to become a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Other	4	28.6%
Broaden and share my skills	3	21.4%
Good programs and access to events	3	21.4%
Community and youth need	2	14.3%
Youth	2	14.3%
Promote specific activities I enjoy	0	0%
14 total responses		100%

In an effort to better predict the potential challenges of being a SPIN Club volunteer, participants were asked to list one negative factor that may discourage others from volunteering for SPIN Clubs. In this open-ended question, 14 participants responded (Table 24). In accordance with the author's hypothesis, the primary disadvantage was a lack of time (35.7%) for participants. Other important and noteworthy disadvantages included a lack of knowledge (29%) and necessary training (14%) which represent areas of potential improvement for Illinois 4-H.

Table 24. Negative Factors that may Discourage Others from Volunteering for SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Time	5	35.7%
Lack of knowledge about 4-H and SPIN volunteer role	4	28.6%
None	2	14.3%
Training	2	14.3%
Patience	1	7.1%
14 total responses		100%

Question number twenty five encouraged participants to list suggestions to help promote SPIN Clubs. Because this was an open-ended question and therefore produced

unique answers, they were categorized and presented in Table 25. Numerous suggestions were identified and included better advertising/promotion (e.g., advertise positive benefits, more advertising, visit 4-H community clubs to recruit) and training (e.g., beginner courses and workshops, phase in new club volunteers).

Table 25. Suggestions on How to Promote SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
School activities and fliers	4	23.3%
Advertise about positive benefits and training	2	11.8%
Ask corporate offices and businesses	2	11.8%
More advertising and publicity	2	11.8%
No suggestions	2	11.8%
SPIN club members visit 4-H community clubs	2	11.8%
Beginner courses and workshops	1	5.9%
Expansion	1	5.9%
Phase in new club volunteers	1	5.9%
17 total responses for 13 participants		100%

Participants were also asked to state what they would have liked to know before they became involved in SPIN Clubs. This open-ended question was answered by 13 participants and is summarized in Table 26. Generally, most respondents would have liked to know more information about 4-H and SPIN Clubs (46%) with additional training of the various necessary tasks (8%). On the contrary, however, some wished they would have known how rewarding the position was (8%).

Table 26. What Participants would have liked to Know before being Involved in SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
More information on 4-H and SPIN Clubs	6	46.1%
Nothing	2	15.4%
Time	2	15.4%
More information on handling of money	1	7.7%
More training	1	7.7%
Very rewarding	1	7.7%
13 total responses		100%

In regards to recruitment, participants shared their thoughts on identifying new SPIN Club volunteers. Of the 11 respondents, over one-third suggested asking businesses and volunteers with background in the topic of interest (Table 27). Others suggested recruiting current/former educators (9%), word-of-mouth advertising (9%), and identify talented parents of kids in the club (9%).

Table 27. Suggestions to Identify New SPIN Club Volunteers

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Ask businesses and volunteers with special interests related to the need	4	36.3%
Current and former educators	1	9.1%
Organizations	1	9.1%
Other	2	18.2%
Parents of kids in the club	1	9.1%
Show a willingness to help others	1	9.1%
Word of mouth	1	9.1%
11 total responses		100%

As potentially one of the more important questions of the entire survey, participants were asked if they received any training for their position as a SPIN Club volunteer. Of

the nineteen participants who answered the question, only eight received prior training (Table 28). The lack of training for new volunteers, especially who are young and have limited background in 4-H, clearly suggest this is critical opportunity for improvement.

Table 28. Participants Receiving Training for their Position

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Yes	8	42.1%
No	11	57.9%
19 total responses		100%

Building off of the results from the previous question, respondents were then asked to rate the training they were given prior to becoming a SPIN club volunteer on a scale from poor to excellent. Each of the eight who responded stating that they received prior training (Table 28) also answered this question (Table 29). Although most (>60%) of respondents stated that they received good to very good training, almost 40% stated that their training was only fair. Therefore, the quality of training also represents an area which could be improved in the recruitment/retention aspect of 4-H SPIN Clubs.

Table 29. Rate of Training Received Before Becoming a SPIN Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Poor	0	0%
Fair	3	37.5%
Good	3	37.5%
Very good	2	25%
Excellent	0	0%
8 total responses		100%

The primary goal of question thirty was to encourage survey participants to further describe their received training. Each of the 8 participants again answered this question (Table 30). A wide range of training methods were used which included three-day

(37.5%) and two-day (12.5%) training sessions. While others used hands-on training and the internet, the author hypothesizes that optimal training may require the use of a combination of methods for the most effective training.

Table 30. Training Given Prior to Becoming a SPIN Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Formal three day training	3	37.5
Formal two day training	1	12.5
Hands on activities	2	25%
Internet	2	25%
8 total responses		100%

From a volunteer standpoint, retention is also a critical component of sustaining adequate levels of volunteers. As a result, participants were asked to list two positive factors that have encouraged them to remain a SPIN Club volunteer. Of the 14 participants who answered this open-ended question, 22 responses were received and are summarized in Table 31. Although the most common answer (six participants) stated that seeing youth improve their own skills was an encouraging factor, others had more personal reasons such as an opportunity to meet others (two participants). Additional responses were also noted in the “other” category, which included that it was part of their job, they had a love of teaching, and having students who wanted to learn.

Table 31. Positive Factors Encouraging Participants to Remain a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Activities	1	4.5%
Commitment	2	9.1%
Community Impact	2	9.1%
Meeting Others	2	9.1%
Other	5	22.7%
Positive Feedback	2	9.1%
Youth Improving Skills	6	27.3%
Youth	2	9.1%
22 total responses from 14 participants		100%

On the contrary, participants were also asked to list one negative factor that may discourage others from staying involved in SPIN Clubs. Twelve participants answered this open-ended question and results can be found in Table 32. Over 40% (five participants) stated that the level of time commitment was a negative factor while one-quarter of participants stated that there were no disadvantages. There were, however, some respondents who suggested that a lack of direction might dissuade others from continuing their involvement in 4-H SPIN Clubs, and again represents a potential area of improvement.

Table 32. Negative Factors Discouraging Others from Staying Involved in SPIN Clubs

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Lack of direction	2	16.7%
Lack of youth participation	1	8.3%
No negative factors	3	25%
Other	1	8.3%
Time	5	41.7%
12 total responses		100%

A very insightful opportunity to learn about the true feelings of surveyed participants was reflected in question 33. This multiple-choice based question was designed to

understand if participants plan on continuing as a SPIN Club volunteer with potential choices including: yes, for as long as I can; yes, for at least one more year; undecided; or no, I am done. Only one participant was certain that they were in their last year, while the remaining were either confident that they would participate for one or more years or were still in the process of deciding (Table 33). Because over one-quarter (five participants) stated that they were still deciding, these data may suggest that continued encouragement and advising of SPIN Club volunteers may be a retention technique to sway those who are currently unsure.

Table 33. Participants on Returning as a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Yes, for as long as I can	12	63.1%
Yes, for at least one more year	1	5.3%
Undecided	5	26.3%
No, I am done	1	5.3%
19 total responses		100%

As a follow-up to the previous question, participants who responded as “no” or “undecided” were then asked why they may not plan on continuing as a SPIN Club volunteer. Nine participants actually responded, and listed that the time commitment was the biggest potential reason for preventing continued volunteering.

Table 34. Participants’ Reason for Not Continuing as a SPIN Club Volunteer

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Plan on remaining a volunteer	4	44.4%
Time	4	44.4%
No reason	1	11.2%
9 total responses		100%

The final question was designed to identify additional resources, training, or support which would make their job easier as a SPIN Club volunteer. A summary of the answers provided by thirteen participants is found in Table 35. Since many answers were very different, it was easier to summarize their answers into a table format. The top ideas included having expectations to make their position easier (15.4%) and training (15.4%). Other responses consisted of basic program support and promotional tools for their clubs.

Table 35. Resources, Training, or Support to Make the SPIN Club Volunteer Position Easier

Answer	# of Responses	Percent of Total
Expectations	2	15.4%
Money for supplies	1	7.7%
More about competitions and programs	1	7.7%
More organized program	1	7.7%
More specific knowledge among 4-H staff	1	7.7%
More student involvement	1	7.7%
Newsletters	1	7.7%
Nothing	1	7.7%
Related specific subject training	1	7.7%
Support on the state level	1	7.7%
Training	2	15.4%
13 total responses		100%

Chapter V – Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions

Discussion and Recommendations

This study focused on identifying key recruitment and retention strategies of SPIN Club volunteers in the Illinois 4-H program. Twenty-three current SPIN Club volunteers participated in this study by completing an online survey regarding their current volunteer position.

Four research objectives were designed to address specific questions. The research objectives included the following:

1. What are the key advantages and disadvantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer?
2. What types of strategies best recruit volunteers for 4-H SPIN Clubs?
3. What types of retention strategies are needed to retain 4-H SPIN Club volunteers?
4. How can 4-H staff better serve SPIN Club volunteers?

The survey questions were tailored to answer these four research objectives. The recruitment and retention techniques discovered in this study plan to be used to help increase new adult participation while retaining those currently volunteering. Furthermore, these findings may also help statewide 4-H youth development educators and program coordinators by increasing SPIN Club volunteer membership.

The survey was sent to county directors and youth development educators who were responsible for sending out the survey to 144 SPIN Club volunteers. A total of 23 surveys were completed with a response rate of 16%. Although 16% would generally be considered a low response rate, high-quality, detailed answers provided critical insights on a relatively new program within Illinois 4-H. The low response rate is likely due to several reasons, such as improper communication between county directors and youth

development educators and their volunteers (e.g., county directors/youth development educators didn't read their email or forgot to forward the survey to volunteers). It is also plausible that volunteers checked their emails and then simply forgot about completing the survey. This low response rate limits the ability to generalize information about the entire population based on the responses.

The background information collected in the survey found that the majority of participants held an occupation in an area outside of agriculture. These career areas included education, finance, and engineering, compared to less than 10% of participants who held an occupation within agriculture. When first initiated, the focus of 4-H was on production agriculture (e.g., animals and crops) and as a result, many volunteers who helped 4-H members had a background in agriculture (National 4-H Organization, n.d.). These results, however, suggest that many volunteers are less connected to agriculture but are able to offer new ideas and opportunities through SPIN Clubs to encourage greater youth involvement.

Survey results indicated that the majority (60%) of volunteers were female; a statistic which further supports the idea that 4-H has evolved since it began in the early 1900s. Participants also indicated that many were between the ages of 25 and 50 years old. These results are in agreement with a study completed on the North Central Region 4-H Volunteers (Nippolt, Pleskac, Schwartz & Swanson, 2012) which showed a majority of the volunteers were between the ages of 32 and 51 years old.

Approximately one-quarter of participants resided in suburbs or cities greater than 50,000 residents, indicating the importance of smaller towns in supplying community volunteers. The results here are similar to the study by Nippolt, Pleskac, Schwartz &

Swanson (2012), where more than three-quarters of the volunteers were from rural areas. A different statistic like this is an important example on how 4-H can differ from region to region with volunteer involvement.

Over three-quarters of the participants in this study had been actively involved with the SPIN Club component of 4-H for less than a year. This agrees with data from Weese (2012), which also found that over one-half of the adult volunteers were new to Illinois 4-H. While new SPIN Club volunteers bring energy and excitement to Illinois 4-H, it is critical that an efficacious retention plan can sustain volunteers for longer than only one year.

On the other hand, almost one-half of the participants stated that they have been involved with the 4-H program (as a whole) for one to twenty years. Many of these volunteers stayed due to the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of youth and learn innovative teaching skills. Furthermore, the other two-thirds of participants (68%) were involved in additional 4-H opportunities such as being an activity/project leader, a community leader, or a 4-H fair volunteer.

A critical element of a successful volunteer requires a thorough understanding of 4-H and SPIN Clubs to better promote the organization to future generations. While over 80% of the participants rated their knowledge of 4-H as very, moderately, or slightly and 70% had an above-average understanding of positive youth development, nearly 30% had little to no background in positive youth development whatsoever. Unfortunately, these data show that there are significant gaps in volunteer training, namely positive youth development, as it pertains to improving the quality of the SPIN Club program.

Surveyed participants also highlighted key topics as potential future SPIN Club areas. Results indicated that nearly two-thirds of current clubs were involved in shooting sports, robotics, and sewing skills. Shooting sports and robotics, for example, have become more popular as an alternative to students who participate in traditional, public school sports. These types of SPIN Clubs, in addition to many others, are critical for allowing youth to develop personal leadership skills while simultaneously learning imperative safety skills.

Survey results also indicated that a near-equal student representation was documented from elementary school (39%), middle school (28%), and high school (33%). A study from Butler & Bowman (1998) discussed the difficulties in finding topics of interest for youth in middle and high school, especially considering the other opportunities available to them at this stage of their life. A potential avenue to increase membership at these levels could include a survey during these ages to evaluate potential topics of interest. Then, the local 4-H office could identify key volunteers to lead a specific SPIN Club.

Over three-quarters of the participants had 5 to 20 youth members within their clubs. This is consistent with SPIN Club requirements which states there must be at least five youth members. Over one-half of the participants met with their clubs weekly or at least twice per month. While it is common to see SPIN Clubs meet during the school year, no participants said they met during the summer months. These findings were contrary to prior beliefs because many volunteers may have more free time to provide educational opportunities during the summer.

A key research objective in this study was to focus on identifying key advantages and disadvantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer. Over one-half of the participants enjoyed the opportunity to work with excited youth and assist in developing their future

leadership skills. This data is in agreement with data from Radhakrishna and Ewing (2012), which also discovered that 4-H volunteers positively impact youth through their development of valuable life skills. It was apparent from respondents, however, that several key disadvantages exist to this volunteer position.

Uncertainty of volunteer expectations, the level of time commitment, and learning new youth training techniques, as indicated by approximately 60% of the surveyed population, suggest that these potential areas should be addressed to further improve the program. The same study completed by Radhakrishna and Ewing (2012) also confirmed the difficulties volunteers incur when receiving additional training. It should be noted that the other 40% suggested there were no disadvantages and enjoyed the program as designed.

An additional research objective was designed to improve the recruitment aspect of 4-H SPIN Club leaders. From experience and *a priori* knowledge the author knew that many volunteers are personally asked to assist in leading a SPIN Club. Although over 60% of participants learned about SPIN Clubs through 4-H program coordinators and 4-H clubs, other common methods included email, organizational involvement, word of mouth, and work. Despite these other avenues for volunteers to learn about SPIN Clubs, the most popular option was clearly through 4-H staff and community clubs. With this data, the author recommends that informational 4-H packets be developed at the local and state levels for potential distribution at any 4-H event to assist in volunteer recruitment.

As documented by Culp III, Aldenderfer, Allen, Fannin-Holliday, Ford, & Goodwin (2006), recruitment packets effectively promoted 4-H and SPIN Club information about numerous leadership opportunities available. These recruitment packets could contain

information about 4-H and SPIN Clubs, the expectations of a SPIN Club volunteer/leader, ideas for developing a SPIN Club, and how to choose a topic.

When participants were asked how to promote SPIN Clubs, many additional ideas were suggested. The most common recommendation included the use of informational fliers with advertising material about the benefits of volunteering, asking corporate offices and businesses for volunteers, and additional advertising at the 4-H community club level. Over 10% suggested beginning workshops on how to develop a SPIN Club as an important promotional opportunity. A consistent theme throughout the survey was that volunteers would have preferred knowing about the level of time commitment before becoming a volunteer; a potential area of discussion in a beginning workshop. Based on these results, the author also recommends the formation of a small, county-based committee (two to three members) which would serve to help identify potential SPIN Club leaders in the community and assist in creating a beginning SPIN Club workshop.

The Volunteer Engagement & Activation Resource (VEAR) program should be used by 4-H staff looking for volunteers to lead or help out with SPIN Clubs. In this program, one can identify the background of many volunteers based on their likes and motivators. The VEAR tool can be helpful when recruiting new volunteers by targeting them specifically by identifying their interests. This could be advertising at businesses or even having 4-H staff attend organizational meetings to discuss the opportunities as a SPIN Club volunteer.

The next objective evaluated retention strategies to keep volunteers active in SPIN Clubs. In any leadership or volunteer position, adequate training is the foundation for future success. Despite this, nearly six of every ten volunteers received absolutely no

training for their position. Those that did receive training, however, rated the training as fair, good, and very good. It was also discovered that various types of training existed. Of those who received it, 75% participated in a two to three day formal training with hands-on activities. The other 25% completed their training online using internet-based activities. The results clearly illustrate the diversity of training provided throughout Illinois.

Although statistical correlations between the type of training received and the level of quality have not been measured, an analysis of this type may provide additional insight as to the optimal types of training. While the difficulties of coordinating a program of this size extend beyond the scope of this thesis, a consistent, statewide training program using hands-on and internet-based training activities might most effectively train and prepare new volunteers. Key topics to address in this training could include participant expectations and leadership techniques to most effectively educate youth.

The majority of surveyed participants stated that they plan to continue as a SPIN Club volunteer for “as long as they can” compared to about 30% who were still undecided. For those who were undecided or did not plan on continuing their service as a SPIN Club volunteer, they cited the level of time commitment as the primary factor contributing to their decision. When asked about potential ways to improve the 4-H SPIN Club program, almost one-third of volunteers also admitted that improved training materials with a description of key expectations would be valuable.

Conclusion

Detailed and insightful responses were received from 23 participants to assist in the completion of this research. Responses indicated the need for improved methods of SPIN

Club volunteer recruitment and retention techniques. To effectively recruit new volunteers, it is imperative that 4-H staff interact with local and corporate businesses, organizations, and citizens. Based on the results of this study, 4-H staff are recommended to use the Volunteer Engagement & Activation Resource (VEAR) program to help recruit and motivate new volunteers. Statewide and local SPIN Club recruitment informational packets should also be used to assist the 4-H staff when recruiting new volunteers. To help new volunteers better understand SPIN Clubs, a mandatory statewide training program should be implemented that can be tailored to meet the needs of each unit. While numerous youth development topics should be discussed at each training program, the author recommends that SPIN Club volunteer expectations and youth training methods be of highest importance. To further improve the retention of volunteers, survey results indicated the need for regular follow-up communication between the volunteers and 4-H staff. In summary, SPIN Club volunteers genuinely enjoy watching youth grow and develop; greater recruitment and retention is possible with improved statewide training, informational SPIN Club packets, and more efficient communication.

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Appendix A – Invitation and Reminder Emails to Participants

Recruitment and Retention of Special Interest Club Adult Volunteers Survey Letter to County Directors and Program Coordinators

Hello,

My name is Melissa Bender and I am the 4-H Special Interest (SPIN) Program Coordinator for Champaign County in Unit 13. In this position I work to develop and coordinate SPIN Clubs for our county. Besides working as a 4-H SPIN Program Coordinator, I am completing my Master's Degree in Agricultural Education through the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. As a part of my degree requirements I am required to complete a thesis project. My research topic is focusing on SPIN Club Volunteers within the state of Illinois. I am specifically looking at recruitment and retention with SPIN Club Volunteers.

I am working closely with Madonna Weese, Extension Specialist 4-H Youth Development, to complete this research. We are hoping the research will help us to learn more about recruitment and retention used with 4-H SPIN Club Volunteers.

In order to complete this research, we need your help. Could you send the attached consent form with the online survey to your current SPIN Club volunteers? These volunteers should include leaders of the club and general volunteers who help with the club. The survey is online, so this will have to be emailed or if it can be mailed and still completed online, that would work as well. Your help is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to email me at benderm@illinois.edu or call (217)-333-7672.

Thank you very much. I look forward to sharing my research with you when complete.

Sincerely,

Melissa Bender

Champaign County 4-H SPIN Coordinator
UW- River Falls Graduate Student

*Recruitment and Retention of Special Interest Club Adult Volunteers Survey Consent
Letter to Participants*

Dear Illinois 4-H SPIN Club Volunteer:

My name is Melissa Bender and I am the 4-H Special Interest (SPIN) Club Program Coordinator for Champaign County in Unit 13. In this position I work to develop and coordinate SPIN Clubs for our county. Besides working as a 4-H Special Interest (SPIN) Club Program Coordinator, I am completing my Master's Degree in Agricultural Education through the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. As a part of my degree requirements I am required to complete a thesis project. I am working closely with Madonna Weese, Extension Specialist 4-H Youth Development, to complete this research.

I am researching the recruitment and retention of Special Interest (SPIN) Club volunteers within the Illinois 4-H program. I ask you to participate in this study by completing the electronic survey using the following link: https://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_em8j3kHB8udKL0F Please do not give your name or county name at any time during the survey; the study is meant to be anonymous. Participation in this study will result in no direct benefits and risks are minimal to all individuals. It is completely voluntary: if you wish to participate, please answer the questions to the best of your ability. If you choose not to participate, please disregard this email and the link to the electronic survey. The survey should take you approximately 15 minutes, depending on the length and depth of the answers you provide. The survey will be active until Friday, March 22nd.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, please contact: Melissa Bender, Researcher; (920)-946-9384 or benderm@illinois.edu. If you have concerns about how you were treated in this study, please contact: Molly Van Wagner, UW-RF Interim Director of Grants and Research 101 North Hall, 410 S. 3rd St., River Falls, WI 54022.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at (217)-333-2670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu. Once again, the link for the survey is: https://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_em8j3kHB8udKL0F

I greatly appreciate your time and assistance. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Melissa Bender
Champaign County 4-H SPIN Coordinator
UW- River Falls Graduate Student

*Recruitment and Retention of Special Interest Club Adult Volunteers Survey Reminder
Letter to County Directors and Program Coordinators*

Hello,

This email is just a reminder of the research study I am conducting on 4-H SPIN Clubs within the state of Illinois. I am specifically looking at recruitment and retention with SPIN Club Volunteers. In order to make sure I get the most data I can, I would like you to follow up with your SPIN Club volunteers by sending out the original email I asked you to send a few weeks ago.

Once again, I am working closely with Madonna Weese, Extension Specialist 4-H Youth Development, to complete this research. We are hoping the research will help us to learn more about recruitment and retention used with 4-H SPIN Club Volunteers within the state of Illinois.

The email below can be copied and sent to all 4-H SPIN Volunteers. Thank you in advance. I look forward to sharing my results with you when my research is complete.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to email me at benderm@illinois.edu or call (217)-333-7672.

Sincerely,

Melissa Bender

Champaign County 4-H SPIN Coordinator
UW- River Falls Graduate Student

**Appendix B - Recruitment and Retention of Special Interest Club Adult Volunteers
Survey**

Recruitment and Retention of SPIN Club Volunteers

1. What is your current occupation? Please provide a brief description.

2. What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

3. How old are you?

- 18-24 (1)
- 25-30 (2)
- 31-40 (3)
- 41-50 (4)
- 51-60 (5)
- 61-70 (6)
- 71-80 (7)
- 81 or older (8)

5. Which statement best describes where you live?

- Farm (1)
- Rural/Small Town (under 10,000) (2)
- Medium Town (10,000-50,000) (3)
- Suburb greater than 50,000 (4)
- City greater than 50,000 (5)

6. To which racial or ethnic group do you most identify?

- African-American (non-Hispanic) (1)
- Asian/Pacific Islanders (2)
- Caucasian (non-Hispanic) (3)
- Latino or Hispanic (4)
- Native American or Aleut (5)
- Other- Please be specific (6) _____

7. What is your current volunteer position? Please be specific.

8. How many years have you been involved in SPIN Clubs?

- Less than 6 months (1)
- 6 months to 1 year (2)

- 2 years (3)
- 3 years (4)
- 4 years (5)

9. What other volunteer opportunities have you participated in while involved in 4-H?

Please select all that apply.

- Activity/Project Leader (1)
- Community Club Leader (2)
- Community Club Volunteer (3)
- 4-H Camp Volunteer (4)
- 4-H Committee Volunteer (5)
- 4-H Fair Volunteer (6)
- Other- Please be specific (7) _____

10. How many years have you been involved as a 4-H volunteer?

- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1-5 years (2)
- 6-10 years (3)
- 11-20 years (4)
- 21-30 years (5)
- 30 years or more (6)

11. How do you rate your knowledge of 4-H?

- Extremely (1)
- Very (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Slightly (4)
- Not at all (5)

12. How do you rate your knowledge of positive youth development in 4-H?

- Extremely (1)
- Very (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Slightly (4)
- Not at all (5)

13. Please provide a brief description of the SPIN Club you work with as a volunteer.

14. What is your role in this SPIN Club?

15. What grade in school are the members who participate in your SPIN Club? Please select all that apply.

- 3rd Grade (1)
- 4th Grade (2)
- 5th Grade (3)
- 6th Grade (4)
- 7th Grade (5)
- 8th Grade (6)
- 9th Grade (7)
- 10th Grade (8)
- 11 Grade (9)
- 12 Grade (10)

16. How many members are involved in your SPIN Club?

- 5-10 (1)
- 11-15 (2)
- 16-20 (3)
- 21-30 (4)
- 31 or more (5)

17. How often does your SPIN Club meet?

- Once a month (1)
- Twice a month (2)
- Three times a month (3)
- Weekly (4)
- Two or more times a week (5)
- Other - Please be specific (6) _____

18. What time of year does your SPIN Club meet?

- Winter (1)
- Spring (2)
- Summer (3)
- Fall (4)
- During the school year (5)
- All year (6)

19. List two advantages of being a SPIN club volunteer.

20. List one disadvantage of being a SPIN club volunteer.

21. How do you rate your knowledge of SPIN clubs?

- Extremely (1)
- Very (2)
- Moderately (3)
- Slightly (4)
- Not at all (5)

22. Why are you a SPIN club volunteer? Please explain.

23. How did you learn about 4-H SPIN clubs?

24. What are the three most important factors that motivated you to become a SPIN club volunteer?

1st Important Factor (1)

2nd Important Factor (2)

3rd Important Factor (3)

25. List one negative factor that may discourage others from volunteering for SPIN clubs.

26. List any suggestions you have about how to promote SPIN clubs.

27. What would you like to have known before you became involved in a SPIN clubs?

28. List any suggestions you have about identifying new SPIN club volunteers.

29. Did you receive any training for your position?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To List two or more positive factors that have encouraged you to remain a SPIN volunteer.

30. How would you rate the training you were given prior to becoming a SPIN volunteer?

- Poor (1)
- Fair (2)
- Good (3)
- Very Good (4)
- Excellent (5)

31. Please describe the training you were given prior to becoming a SPIN volunteer.

32. List two positive factors that have encouraged you to remain a SPIN club volunteer.

33. List one negative factor that may discourage others from staying involved in SPIN clubs.

34. Do you plan on continuing as a SPIN club volunteer?

- Yes, for as long as I can (1)
- Yes, for at least one more year (2)
- Undecided (3)
- No, I am done (4)

If No, I am done Is Selected, Then Skip To What resources, training, or support would make your job as a SPIN club volunteer easier.

35. Why are you not planning to continue as a SPIN club volunteer? Please explain.

36. What resources, training, or support would make your job as a SPIN club volunteer easier?

Appendix C – Responses to Open – Ended Questions

Question 1: What is your current occupation? Please provide a brief description. (17 responses)

Text Response
Middle School Teacher
I am a Software Engineer. I design software for different industries. For many years, I designed cellular communications systems. Recently, I made an industry change and I am designing software for components of military aircraft.
I am a CSM in a farm and feed store. I manage of the front end. Run a register.
Teacher
Homemaker, Homeschooler
8th grade science and STEM teacher.
Teacher
Financial analyst
Graduate student studying human dimensions of wildlife
Seed testing and plant breeding.
Engineering Supervisor--I oversee a research and development team in a heavy equipment manufacturing company.
RN - Assistant Director for Home Care agency
Law Enforcement
I am currently a cashier at a local store.
I am a widow and have not worked at a paying job for quite a while. I love to sew and make quilts.
Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development
Sales and Marketing manager. Environmental Educator

Question 6: What is your current volunteer position? (13 responses)

Text Response
4-H SPIN Coordinator
4-H Lego Robotics Volunteer
a volunteer leader for a spin club
Volunteer
Gardening SPIN club leader
4-H Afterschool Robotics SPIN Club Leader
club leader
Shooting Sports County Coordinator
4H Leader
Shotgun Instructor
spin club assistant
I am a leader of a Spin club helping girls learn to sew on sewing machines.
Leader of SPIN Club

Question 8: What other volunteer opportunities have you participated in while involved in 4-H? Please select all that apply. (14 responses)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Activity/Project Leader	3	21%
2	Community Club Leader	5	36%
3	Community Club Volunteer	2	14%
4	4-H Camp Volunteer	0	0%
5	4-H Committee Volunteer	3	21%
6	4-H Fair Volunteer	5	36%
7	Other- Please be specific	4	29%
Other- Please be specific			
none			
ecobots			
none			
Judge for wildlife projects			

Question 12: Please provide a brief description of the SPIN Club you work with as a volunteer. (19 responses)

Text Response
FRC Robotics Club
Lego Robotics Students work together to build and program a robot to complete various tasks. They teams then go to competitions.
Got robot? Is mainly a FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) team that uses 4-H as a way to be a 501c3 non-profit organization. While the team actually started from a 4-H team 5 years ago, they are much more involved with FIRST than they are 4-H
They are called the rural king windmills. About 13 kids. 3rd,4th, and 5th grades
Gardening: everything from asparagus to zinnias. We've made worm bins, harvested our own worm compost, made compost tea, started a hydroponics experiment, learned some basic botany and soil science, and learned about native plants for our area. We will soon be learning about seed starting, garden planning (including how to make a garden in a really small space), organic pest control methods, and obviously growing our own gardens.
It is a Robotics SPIN Club for 7th and 8th grade students in my middle school. We meet after school twice a week during the school year. Some years we participate in FLL, some years we participate in the Illinois State 4-H Robotic Team tournament. Some years we have as few as 5 students, this year I have 28.
Lego robotics activity
I have helped created a baking SPIN club for youth ages 8-9 in the Champaign-Urbana community. We will be baking different baked goods with the kids and teaching them safety tips for the kitchen.
Clubs are currently in development
We are a newly formed and forming Shooting Sports Spin Club with a large potential of positively impacting a lot of rural and city youth
Shooting Sports - Rifle Instructor
Mine is a FIRST Robotics club. We participate in the FIRST competition; as such, we build a robot and take it to competition every year. We also do outreach activities to promote robotics in the community.
Introduction to electricity. Simple circuits, parallel circuits and the electric grid.
sewing
Ford Iroquois Sharp Shooters
it is a club teaching young girls how to sew, they have made a simple quilt block
We have 18 girls who are very eager to learn how to sew on sewing machines.
Our club has been doing a cooking spin club
The Jr. Naturalist club is a club geared towards fostering a love of nature for children in 4H.

Question 13: What is your role in this SPIN Club? (19 responses)

Text Response
Mentor
Not sure of the official title. Sponsor two teams at a middle school.
I am a mentor. I handle logistics and social networking for the team.
My role is being a leader helping them with fun events and projects that we have done.
Leader, research and implementation
Leader/coach
Teacher/ sponsor
I am the leader of the SPIN club and have been organizing safety tips, meetings, and making sure we have everything.
I would provide support and a connection between leaders and the extension office
Leader coach mentor
Instructor
I am the coach of the robotics team.
Teacher
adult volunteer - parent of member
Instructor
i assist the leader when i am available
Leader and teacher
Leader
Leader

Question 16: How often does your SPIN Club meet? (19 responses)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Once a month	1	5%
2	Twice a month	4	21%
3	Three times a month	0	0%
4	Weekly	6	32%
5	Two or more times a week	3	16%
6	Other - Please be specific	5	26%
	Total	19	100%

Other - Please be specific
daily in Jan/Feb; otherwise about twice a week
N/A
6 events and 4-5 meetings per year
3+ times a week during build season; approximately monthly in the off-season
3 disciplines may meet 6 times a year each

Question 18: List two advantages of being a SPIN Club volunteer? (17 responses)

Text Response
background checked, support from 4H for resources for club
I get to work with students I normally wouldn't have contact with. I am learning a new program.
For me, volunteering is a way to give back to the community. I have been a FIRST volunteer for many years without and team affiliation. While my roles as a FIRST volunteer are necessary, my role as a SPIN club volunteer give me greater satisfaction since I get to contribute directly to the development of future engineers. Interacting with them makes me better and more inspired at my job.
I GET TO SHOW THE KIDS WHAT 4-H IS ALL ABOUT. THE FUN THINGS THEY CAN DO AS A GROUP.
The students' enthusiasm is infectious! It's an opportunity to form strong relationships with my students.
Access to other activities that are available. Access to resources
Teaching students about something new they are really interested in and educating today's youth.
offer something the community and youth was looking for Help teach and get youth an activity that can be done by a large cross-section of youth of all athletic abilities and positive give them the opportunity to get involved and excel in something that will be enjoyable last them a lifetime
A good opportunity to help youth.
- Awareness and availability of opportunities for outreach - Financial support through SPIN club grants
Great interaction with the students Teaching the principles of electricity The opportunity to encourage students to develop their skills and mental acuteness
focus on specific project - learning topic one on one assistance with something that not at all familiar with
Spend time sharing knowledge of sports with youth
get to know children from out of my town have fun
I have gotten to meet girls from our two counties that I had never met before. The girls are very eager to learn and have been very thankful which has been a surprise to me.
Working with the Youth and learning something new myself
The ability to reach out to the community and foster a love of nature in its children.

Question 19: List one disadvantage of being a SPIN Club volunteer. (16 responses)

Text Response
lots of forms to fill out
Not sure of all of the 'robot expectations.' Kind of learning as we go.
Hard question.... the time is about the only negative I can think of. I spend a lot of time with the team, time I could be spending with my family. But overall, the time isn't really that important.
i HAVE NO DISADVANTGES , i ENJOY BEING A VOLUNTEER
It can be very time consuming to be the main leader/coach.
none
SPIN Clubs are a bit of a time commitment.
can't think of any disadvantages at this time have had all the support and backing I have ever asked for
Time consuming and sometime stressful.
- I can't think of any
Finding the time on a consistent basis
None
since i am still working i can't always be available
I'm not sure who are members of 4-H or are just learning. I feel I have a lot to learn
none
Saturday mornings are spent with the club instead of family.

Question 21: Why are you a SPIN Club volunteer? Please explain. (18 responses)

Text Response

My presence as a SPIN club volunteer did not come directly through 4H channels, rather the club that was going to be started was integrated into 4H.

School needed a sponsor for the robotics grant they received from 4-H.

To inspire bright young minds to pursue a future in Math, Science, and Engineering. The U.S. is losing out to other countries in this area and there is no reason for it besides the fact that we stopped glamorizing these fields to our young. If you ask a student to name you a famous inventor besides Edison, they probably couldn't. Or to name a famous scientist besides Einstein. But ask them to name their favorite athlete, singer, or actor and they will have an answer right away.

WHY? BECAUSE I LOVE TO SHOW THE KIDS WHAT THEY CAN DO. HOW FUN IT IS TO BE HELPERS. TO LEARN NEW PROJECTS. MEET NEW FRIENDS. TO BE CREATIVE.

To provide gardening information to kids who are interested in learning; also helps local boy scouts earn 2 merit badges.

My students were interested in robotics but there were no programs that existed for them. I knew 4-H was beginning to offer a robotics project and asked for support. 4-H came through with flying colors in terms of training, mentoring, and seed money. I've been blessed.

Help my students expand their knowledge of engineering

The full club has too many rules for belonging and participating several of the youth involved joined the spin club because the requirements of a regular club did not appeal to them. Here on the other hand the spin club we currently offer is limited to one discipline and no other requirements though I think we could ask and get most of the youth to expand into other areas if it was not so much thrown at them at one time but more eased into with the regular clubs,

Life time rifle competitor and coach.

Because I feel that as a leader of my club I can be a positive influence in the club members' lives-which is a very rewarding experience for me. In particular, being a SPIN club leader lets my team have access to the support and resources that 4-H provides.

To develop more interest in the electrical projects at the county fairs

love to be involved with my kids and help them learn something new that I cannot necessarily teach or offer experiences related to

To give youth including my children a positive and rewarding activity to participate in.

former 4-h leader and my son volunteered me

I was volunteered by my daughter-in-law. They were looking for someone to help teach girls to learn to sew.

It is part of my job

I am interested in fostering the love of nature in children. Part of my interest was based on the completion of my school internship with the Master Naturalist program.

Question 22: How did you learn about 4-H SPIN Clubs? (18 responses)

Text Response
talking to Lisa Diaz... she said this was the route to go to establish a 4H presence
Through the school.
The Illinois FLL Head Referee recommended me to the Kane County 4-H as a Robotics Judge 5 years ago. Until that time, I had no idea 4-H had a robotics program. In that position I met what became 'got robot?'
THOUGH MY WORK.
Extension office
Through my involvement in the 4-H program.
From an e-mail
Working at the IL 4-H Foundation.
through our shooting sports training state coordinator and extension contact
Extension coordinator contacted me.
Through a friend who is also a 4-H robotics club leader.
Jen Odle
through our extension office
Coordinator informed me it was being developed
on the H CE county board and as above my son volunteered
I have heard a bit about them over the past few years but had not been involved
The local 4H chapter
Through the Master Naturalist Program

Questions 23: What are the three most important factors that motivated you to become a SPIN Club volunteer? (17 responses)

1st Important Factor	2nd Important Factor	3rd Important Factor
promote the activity	4H is a positive brand	networking support
Students	Activity	
Good Program (FIRST)	Good People	Chance to make a difference
MY SKILLS	BEING AN ARTIEST	WORKING WITH OTHERS
local need	favorite hobby	
kids' interest	my interest	training and financial support
Activity interest level of my students	resources given	
Get 4-H House involved in the community	Teach today's youth	Sounded fun
did not want to become to overwhelmed with stuff that I was not interested in	wanted to focus on one thing and be very effecting with it instead of mediocre with a lot of things	seemed like the best option and fit my needs and the communities needs at the time
shared special interest	my children participate	other instructors are friends
Access to events and outreach opportunities	Financial support	Educational resources
To develop students interest in electricity	Somebody needed to do it	I like working with students
kids	experience something new	helping other kids
My Children participating	I enjoy teaching firearms related activities	I wanted to insure the instruction was safely managed
I was volunteered	I have enjoyed working with the young people	I have learned a lot and have gotten out of my comfort zone
Youth	Community	New knowledge
broadening skill set	fostering interest in nature	completion of school

Question 24: List one negative factor that may discourage others from volunteering for SPIN Clubs. (14 responses)

Text Response
Lack of knowledge. time
MAYBE NOT HAVING THE TRAINING lack of subject matter knowledge
None time commitment
Patience level may be too low to work with kids. I think that the most discouraging factor I have seen so far when asking other people to participate in my club or other clubs is the time commitment. When we describe our club activities, it becomes clear that the level of commitment is high. I think we need to create a model where people can start volunteering at low levels of time commitment, and hopefully some of them will become very engaged and eventually increase their level of commitment.
Time commitment not sure how it all works in relation to larger 4H groups they have to pay for their training There needs to be more explanations on what is involved
n/a I can't think of any other than the time necessary to volunteer.

Question 25: List any suggestions you have about how to promote SPIN Clubs. (13 responses)

Text Response

I am not aware of what other SPIN clubs do.

Advertise the competitions. Next month Unit-5 is having their event in Northern Illinois. I have no idea how much this event has been advertised outside of 4-H. Look to corporate sponsors. Many Illinois companies are involved in farming and robotics. Get them involved. They will get their employees involved. Their employees will spread the word.

NEWSPAPERS, FAIRS, SCHOOLS. FUN ACTIVITIES FOR THE KIDS TO JOIN.

Advertise that 4-H offers volunteer training and assists with obtaining grant money. Have existing SPN clubs visit general project/community clubs and get the kids and parents excited about it.

I am not sure the way my particular club is starting out I think promotion is the last of out worried we need to think more about expansion

Offer beginners courses and workshops. Keep the advanced kids moving and interested while at the same time bringing in new kids and building skills from the ground up.

I am not sure if the question is about how to promote the creation of new SPIN clubs or to promote participation in existing clubs...I assume it is the former. I think that a good way of getting new volunteers involved and creating new clubs would be to offer them the opportunity to participate in an existing club for a year, and who could potentially start their own club at a later time. What I mean by this is that you could focus on recruiting volunteers to participate in existing clubs and while they are doing that, promote among them the idea of creating new clubs. In that way the level of commitment is 'phased'

Keep doing what you are doing. Talk to more businesses and share the needs

share that it may run for only a few weeks share that it is your choice to participate in events/learning opportunities don't have to be a current 4H club member flyer sent home through school district

more publicity

Get the word out to our schools. Need a person from Extension office to speak to the young people to explain what this is about.

n/a

School flyers/ Mentions at the normal 4H club meetings.

Question 26: What would you like to have known before you become involved in a SPIN Club? (13 responses)

Text Response
How money flows through 4H to support the club; how to conduct purchases; how to secure grants
Background of the program and SPIN clubs in general. What is 4-H?
I still don't know what a SPIN club involves. I haven't been told of any training to learn about SPIN clubs. Maybe if I knew more, I would get more involved. I am mainly here for the FIRST involvement. Is it possible that there are aspects of being a SPIN club that I could have my team take advantage of that my team does not currently take advantage of... I do not know.
MAYBE MORE TRAINING
nothing I research it well and had a tremendous amount to help and information about what was expected and required from me and my spin club
Nothing that I can think of.
I would have liked to know more about 4-H in general and SPIN clubs in particular (I still don't know much). In outreach events, where we identify ourselves as a 4-H teams, people ask us what 4-H is, and I feel that I have a very narrow view of what it is, and so we are not adequately representing 4-H.
How much time it requires
that is super rewarding and exciting for me to learn too
more if what it would entail, time wise etc.
Exactly what are we doing and who is leading. I felt like I was pushed into this. But I have enjoyed it after we got things started
More information period, how they are ran, the goals, how long they should last, activities to be used in the spin clubs, etc.
A description of specific duties and expectations of club leaders.

Question 27: List any suggestions you have about identifying new SPIN Club volunteers. (11 responses)

Text Response
Hard to know, but lining up interest of the potential volunteer to club focus seems critical
Look to the best and the brightest of the youth involved already in 4-H. get them involved in a SPIN club, and frequently their parents will follow. I had mentioned getting corporate involvement. This is another place that one can find new volunteers, in fact that is the way I got involved with FIRST, which led me later to being involved with 4-H.
WILLING TO HELP OTHERS
I'm fishing for adult volunteers by asking former student teachers, substitute teachers, tutors and social worker interns to get involved as assistants.
word of mouth seems to work the best
i am currently working on an additional spin club formation that will compliment my spin club we will them work together and fill even bigger need for the community
Look for adults who have the same interests as the SPIN club.
Get closer to the source of volunteers--for example, for robotics teams, approach technology companies in the area and offer awareness events and information at the company itself.
Identify specific talents and allow those people to share - even if for just a few weeks - doesn't have to be a yearlong commitment.
Check with the local HCE units in a county. there is much experience in those women
n/a

Question 30: Please describe the training you were given prior to becoming a SPIN volunteer. (8 responses)

Text Response
2- Days. Day 1 talked about 4-H, expectations, and how to work with kids. Day 2 Introduced the robot program.
INTERNET, i ALSO WORKED WITH KIDS IN A PARK DISTRICT and had a course in early childhood education.
It's been 4 years, I don't remember much. The woman in charge of the state STEM program came and led a few of through a few sample activities in the 4-H robotics project and gave us some hands-on experiences with LEGO Mind storm Robots.
I have formal training by national shotgun instructors and lots of informal training by my program director and staff at the extension office they are extremely helpful and knowledgeable is the processes
3 day course as mandated by the shooting sports program.
What would be involved How to explain and build electric circuits On job training
Shotgun
it was all online, not very effective in my book

Question 31: List two positive factors that have encouraged you to remain a SPIN Club volunteer. (14 responses)

Text Response
Committed to the club's focus; very committed to the club's success
Positive feedback from the team and their parents.
The activities that we have.
I love teaching what I love to do to kids who want to learn.
~The growth in my students and the unique experiences they've had ~How much I've learned and the confidence it gave me to stretch and start teaching a pre-engineering course in my middle school
I enjoy the activity
We are growing and filling a vital need in the community and its satisfying seeing the smiles on the youth faces doing something that they probably never would have been able to without the availability of our spin club
Seeing kids improve their skills and confidence level. Friends I have made.
- The clear improvements in how the club members have learned how to work effectively with each other, respect each other, and conduct themselves professionally - The satisfaction that comes from feeling that I am making a positive impact in my community
See factors listed previously
the other volunteers The youth participating
I have enjoyed it. It is fun seeing the young people see what they can do.
youth & it's part of my job
I love watching the kids learning and loving what nature has to offer. I also enjoy watching the club members work together for a common end.

Question 32: List one negative factor that may discourage others from staying involved in SPIN Clubs. (12 responses)

Text Response
Chemistry of the club - how it's run?
Lack of direction.
hours
It can be very time consuming.
can't think of any
none
Time commitment.
Time commitment
Lack of Student participation
Slow development of State competitions
n/a
Never enough time in a day...

Question 34: Why are you not planning to continue as a SPIN Club volunteer? (9 responses)

Text Response
Time commitment.
I am planning to remain a volunteer
I am planning to stay on as a volunteer
Time commitments to other activities
It is well run and my students like it
N/A
I just don't know if my work responsibilities and commitments will keep increasing (they have been for the last year) to a point where I cannot devote enough time to the club and provide the quality of leadership that the team deserves.
must have hit the wrong button, plan to continue being a volunteer
I am undecided because I am not sure what time constraints my future job will bring.

Question 35: What resources, training, or support would make your job as a SPIN Club volunteer easier? (13 responses)

Text Response
more specific knowledge among 4H staff with regard to how to build up skill sets of students involved in the club
Learning the robotics program/how the competitions work.
A more organized program. Direction of where the program is going and what its goals are... newsletters
I've been blessed to have great support from a talented mentor club. I don't need much more at this time, but in the future I may need to tap into someone's technical and mechanical expertise. I do not have a volunteer connection with anyone in related industry.
there could be more support from the state level on equipment like firearms at least allowing them to be donated to a spin club or a process to allow them to be donated but it seems like the state just ignores the fact that to teach a class with small bore rifle or shotgun you need rifles and shotguns they are not perishable and are a key part of teaching how to handle a firearm you actually need a firearm. as far as everything else they are more that helpful with information just not information on how to acquire the teaching tools the classes are all about
Just money for supplies.
- I would like to learn more about how to lead youth--how to motivate them, how to generate good habits in them. I constantly work with adults in my work place, but leading young students is completely different.
More student involvement
Related Firearms instructor training
Tell the leaders what is expected. WE have been meeting for 6 straight weeks. I think It would be better to spread it out a bit.
any training would be nice
Detailed list of expectations