Appoint an adult volunteer to be the Diamond Clover Coordinator in the club. This person would handle all the administrative work associated with the program, and would work in tandem with the leader when important deadlines were approaching. A few months out of the year would be busy for this person, but the rest of the year is easy.

On the goal/task forms, “local unit” means the COUNTY level, not club level.

Be sure to tell kids and parents to keep the first page intact when they check off their goals and do not cut at the dotted line.

This is a goal-setting and goal-meeting program. For older kids especially, we found it helpful for them to check off one or two more goals than the minimum requirement, in order to have a little more flexibility at the end of the year as to which goals they actually completed.

Diamond Clover forms seem to get lost easily when released back into the 4-Her’s household at the end of the year! Stress how important it is NOT TO LOSE THE ORIGINAL FORM.

Formulate a list of your own club’s routine activities that can be tied to achieving a goal in the Diamond Clover program, or refer to the list in your packet. For example which activities does your club do that would be considered county- or state-level events? Which activities does your club do that would be considered service learning or fundraising? Even if you think it’s obvious, it’s not. Kids (and parents) don't always put two and two together in terms of how their ordinary 4-H activities can count toward this program. Be helpful at the end of the year in getting kids to remember the things they did that could complete a goal.

Generally speaking, club leaders have control over the decision-making in levels 1-4 (e.g., “was that goal actually achieved?”). Any issues that arise at levels 5 and 6 have to be dealt with at the county.

The first three Diamond Clover levels are pretty simple to achieve. Level 4 is where things get a little harder because leadership is introduced. (For example “participate in an activity” becomes “lead an activity.”) Encourage team or group leadership to introduce this concept and make the goal achievable for new or younger 4-Hers at this level.

There are two parts to Level 6—the task/goal form, which is identical to level 5 except it requires one additional task; and the substantial service project (100 or more total hours just for the 4-Her!). For this reason, level 6 generally takes two years. One year is usually devoted to the service project. And it may take more than one year to complete all eight of the goals on the goal/task sheet.

Have a brainstorming session for level 5 and 6 candidates early on—even the year before. Set aside time for a short meeting for the 4-Her, club leader, club Diamond Clover Coordinator and a parent to hear if the 4-Her has any idea of what they would like to do for their large service project, and when it would take place. It may be important in your yearly club planning to know this. Some 4-Hers will have a definite idea of what they want to do, and others will welcome suggestions.

With the state deadline of only accepting Diamond Clover proposals once a year, it is very important that teens try and get in their projects done either their sophomore or junior year of high school at the latest. We think sophomore year is the ideal year. That means the levels that come before that should culminate so the level 6 ends up sometime in the early high school years.

You may not skip a level once the program is started. If a 4-Her starts at age 8, they will easily have enough time to complete all six levels by early to mid high school. When older kids join 4-H, the leader and parent should try to figure out his or her beginning level, taking into account age, initiative, and which year in high school they want to be doing the Level 6 service project. If possible try to start no higher than level 3.

As with a Boy Scout Eagle project, your 4-H club should rally around whomever is executing their level 6 service project with all the help and support possible. However always keep in mind that it is the level 6 candidate who is in charge of his or her own project, and he or she should always be the leader and decision maker.

There is a document on the Montgomery 4-H website to guide you through writing the Level 6 proposal. There is now also a new Final Report and Signature page for when the Level 6 service project is complete. If you have any questions about these forms, don't hesitate to e-mail me at cdobos@washingtonian.com.