

9. Leadership

Learning to lead is an important skill that benefits you far beyond our hobby. As you learn from your youth leader, we hope you will be inspired to take the initiative to become a leader yourself. As you develop and deepen your knowledge and skills gained through FRA activities, assist in teaching your fellow youth members and in helping your youth leader to decide which activities to pursue with the group. The following are intended to help you assume and develop a leadership role within your club.

Activity 9.1: Becoming a youth officer.

Become an officer within your youth group and help decide what topics and activities your group will do this year.

Activity 9.2: Organizing a group display.

Take charge of organizing a group pebble pup display at your club show or at another venue, such as a library display window.

Activity 9.3: Leading a show-and-tell session or presentation.

Lead a group show-and-tell session, presentation, or symposium to adult members of your club.

Activity 9.4: Planning and leading a field trip.

Plan and lead a field trip.

Activity 9.5: Overseeing a newsletter column or an entire youth newsletter.

Oversee a monthly column for a year in your club's newsletter or start and edit your own junior members' newsletter.

Activity 9.6: Managing a youth activity booth at a local gem show.

Either on your own or working with adult members of your club, help to decide on activities to include in a Kids' Activity booth at your local gem show, and then help to run the booth during the show.

Activity 9.7: Mentoring.

Become a mentor to younger or less experienced members of your club, sharing your knowledge and experience with them in a specific project, such as how to craft a cab, how to build and curate a collection, etc.

Activity 9.8: Recruiting.

Help grow your club by bringing in a new member who attends at least three meetings—and, hopefully, ends up joining!

Activity 9.9: Fundraising.

Just as Girl Scouts sell cookies to help support their activities, work with your youth leader to come up with ways to raise funds to help support your club.

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- 9.2 Organizing a group display
- 9.3 Leading a show-and-tell session or presentation
- 9.4 Planning and leading a field trip
- 9.5 Overseeing a newsletter column or an entire youth newsletter
- 9.6 Managing a youth activity booth at a local gem show
- 9.7 Mentoring
- 9.8 Recruiting
- 9.9 Fundraising.

To earn your Leadership badge, you need to complete at least 3 of the 9 activities. Check off all the activities you've completed. When you have earned your badge, sign below and have your FRA leader sign and forward this sheet to the AFMS Juniors Program chair.

Date completed

My signature

Youth leader's signature

Name of my club

Leader's preferred mailing address for
receiving badge:

Back-up page 9.1: Becoming a youth officer.

Building leaders is essential to the future of our clubs, providing the guidance, ideas, and inspiration that keep us all going. It's never too early to start cultivating the leaders of tomorrow! You should think about assigning or electing youth officers, especially if you have older kids within your group. The overall structure might mirror the offices of your adult club, but with fewer positions and fewer demands. Adjust the type and number of offices to the ages and abilities of the kids in your group and the size of your group.

If you have a large number of older kids who prove enthusiastic and ambitious, some basic offices to consider might be a youth group President to oversee meetings and to help decide what topics and activities to pursue for the coming year. A Recording Secretary would keep notes from meetings to outline, distribute, and archive and to include in the regular club newsletter. A Treasurer could help lead efforts to raise funds to be used for special youth events and might help run the youth activity booth at your local gem show (see Activity 9.6). A Newsletter Editor might oversee constructing a youth newsletter or a youth section of your club's regular newsletter (see Back-up page for Activity 9.5). A Field Trip coordinator could help decide on two or three special trips for the kids in your club to organize and to take over the course of a year (for instance, an outdoor collecting trip during warmer weather and an indoor visit to a museum for the colder or rainier seasons).

If you have a small group with mostly young kids, you may end up appointing a single Youth Assistant from among the older, more mature kids within the group. Such an assistant might help give advice about activities to try in a group setting that he or she believes would be the most interesting to his/her friends and could help you come in early to do any advance preparations and set-up.

With all the demands kids have on their time today, however, don't overload them. This should be an enjoyable, rewarding experience, not a burden or a drudge.

Back-up page 9.2: Organizing a group display.

One thing I always look for at a local gem show—and more and more often am disappointed not to find—is a Pebble Pups group display. Frequently, members of neighboring clubs band together and enter a club display at shows of neighboring clubs, and the combined efforts and materials make for truly outstanding exhibits.

Similarly, while a single young child just starting out in the hobby may not have many pieces in his or her collection, the combined efforts of all the kids in a club can result in a great display that illustrates the range of individual interests and the overall scope of the hobby. The kids in any club should always be encouraged to put together such a group display—and it's even better if the kids themselves take charge of organizing and arranging it.

For any kids who volunteer to oversee such an effort, you should lend advice and assistance as requested and should the need become apparent. Hold a meeting with the kid/s organizing the effort to discuss how to go about it and share the Back-up pages for Badge 6 – Showmanship, especially Activity 6.1 on techniques for effective displays. Among the procedures they'll need to consider are:

- Should we have a theme (for instance, fossils, or the many varieties of quartz, or local rocks and minerals)?
- How and when will we gather together material from our fellow club members?
- Where and when will we all meet to talk about how best to arrange our display?
- Where will we get our case and when will we set it up?
- What will we need for set-up (e.g., liners, risers, display stands, etc.)?
- Will we make uniform labels or ask that everyone bring their own labels?
- How will we keep track of everyone's individual specimens?
- How and when we will return everyone's specimens?

The easiest place to assemble such a group display is at the club's annual show. However, search out other public spots within the community, as well, such as the local library, public schools, local museums, or perhaps a friendly jewelry or crafts store owner.

***Note:** Kids who participate in constructing a group display can use this activity toward earning their Showmanship badge simultaneously (Activity 6.4).*

Back-up page 9.3: Leading a show-and-tell session or presentation.

Kids expressing an interest in leading a group show-and-tell session, presentation, or symposium should be provided with the Back-up pages for Badge 7 – Communication, especially for Activity 7.1 – Oral report and Activity 7.5 – Holding a symposium.

Show-and-tell sessions are the easiest to arrange and ought to be organized around a theme. Here are just a few ideas:

- Things I collected on our most recent club field trip.
- Things I purchased at our annual club show.
- What I've made at our club workshop.
- My most valuable specimen and why I like it.

While a free-flowing show-and-tell session can more-or-less run itself once it gets going, a full-scale symposium can take a great deal more planning. If your junior member chooses to go this route, be sure to take the time to review Back-up page 7.5, and then—have fun!

***Note:** Kids who participate in a group show-and-tell session or presentation can use this activity toward earning their Communication badge simultaneously (Activities 7.1 and 7.5).*

Back-up page 9.4: Planning and leading a field trip.

A youth member expressing a desire to plan and lead a field trip should first exhibit complete familiarity with Badge 8 on Field Trips and should have earned that badge before undertaking this activity. Share all Back-up pages from Badge 8.

***Note:** Kids who participate in a field trip as part of this badge activity can use this toward satisfying requirements to earn the Field Trip badge simultaneously (Activities 8.2 and 8.3).*

Back-up page 9.5: Overseeing a newsletter column or an entire youth newsletter.

When I belonged to the Carmel Valley Gem and Mineral Society in California, we had one youth member who was dinosaur crazy. It was the same time that *Jurassic Park* hit the scene, and you couldn't round a corner, walk into a grocery store, or turn on the TV without seeing a dinosaur. "Dinosaur Bob," as he came to be known, took the initiative to start his own "Fact of the Month" column in the club newsletter, a column devoted solely to the topic of fossils (usually dinosaurs) and graced with his own dino drawings. Encourage a similar child or youth with a passionate interest in the hobby to do the same.

You could either have a single youth correspondent who pens a monthly column or you could establish a Youth Column and encourage kids to take turns contributing to it. To make the column stand out, you should place it at the same spot in each issue of the newsletter, where it's easy to flip to—such as the last page or a middle fold.

Dinosaur Bob had a theme going for him, making it easy to come up with topics each month. His columns usually started with a simple question that grew into a short essay: What color were dinosaurs? Were dinosaurs warm-blooded or cold? How did the dinosaurs die? A year-long series of mineral columns can evolve from focusing on the birthstone of the month. A lapidary column might take the form of a Dear Abby column, addressing such vexing questions as, "One writer asks, 'Why won't my jade take a decent polish?'" "How do you avoid flat spots on a cab?" You might establish themes like these, or simply allow kids to write what tickles their fancy at the time.

Caution: *Don't undertake the following unless you're willing to commit a great deal of time!* If you have a truly enthusiastic bunch of kids, including some real wordsmiths, a great project is pulling together a full-scale juniors newsletter—a newsletter by and for junior members. A terrific model is the "Mineral Mites Bulletin" inaugurated by Ismael Sanchez, Advisor to the Bakersfield Mineral Mites of California. Their newsletter consists of the Advisor's Report (written by the adult youth leader), the Assistant Advisor's Report, juniors officers contributions, an events calendar, a "Mineral of the Month" column, clippings from articles in other rock club newsletters, jokes, poems, games, juniors activities (for instance, learning about mining with a chocolate chip cookie), notice of awards for Mineral Mites accomplishments, and Federation reports. In addition to contributions from the Mineral Mites officers, all junior members are encouraged to become involved in the publication. It's printed in 4-color and includes clip art and photos. A truly outstanding effort! However, if you have just a small group and limited resources, even a much smaller effort can prove to be a lot of fun and a great learning experience for your kids. You could put together a single-page monthly flyer or fold a sheet of paper and create a four-page mini-newsletter. But for even a modest newsletter, heed the warning posted above! A monthly newsletter just simply takes time and effort, no matter how long or short, and no two ways about it.

Note: *Kids who work on this activity can use it to work toward earning the Communication badge simultaneously (Activity 7.2).*

Back-up page 9.6: Managing a youth activity booth at a local gem show.

Every show should have a youth activity booth, and it's even better if youth are actually running it! One thing my own kids often eagerly volunteered for—even after they grew older and began to tire of the old man's fascination with rocks and fossils—was helping to run the youth activities booth at our annual show. They especially liked the part where you take money and spin the spinning wheel or sell a grab bag.

You should hold a meeting with kids to decide on what sorts of activities they'll want to sponsor and how much space they'll need. Here are examples of fun activities often seen at gem shows:

- A “Wheel of Fortune” spinning wheel, where every spin wins a rockhound prize of a mineral specimen, crystal, polished slab, fossil, etc., donated by club members. If you don't have a spinning wheel, a variation is to have kids draw a numbered ticket from a hat or a bowl and match it to numbered specimens on a prize table.
- Grab bags filled with tumbled stones.
- Making fossils (see Activity 3.2).
- Sand-sifting with a screen or colander for small fossils and gemstones in a box of sand.
- A “Pirate's Treasure Chest” filled with tumbled stones from which kids get to pick an assortment.
- Black Sand Fun, where a container is filled with magnetic sand and a series of magnets.
- Making rock critters by gluing together flat or round stones and attaching eyes, pipe cleaner arms or antennae, feathers, etc., to make snowmen, caterpillars, bugs, etc.
- Rock painting, creating lady bugs, fat cats, and other creatures by painting on large, smooth flat or round stones with tempura.
- Coloring and drawing with coloring book pages of earth science scenes (available at children's bookstores, teaching stores, etc.) or on large sheets of paper rolled out on a table. (This activity should be free. In addition to having activities that kids pay for at a show, you should always have a few that any child can do free-of-charge, such as coloring and drawing or the Black Sand Fun.)

More activities may be found on the AFMS web site: <http://www.amfed.org>. Tab on “Kids Show Activities” within the Kids Corner section of the web site.

In addition to deciding on what activities to sponsor, kids should determine a budget, help get the supplies they'll need (relying as much as possible on donations from adult members and sympathetic local store owners within the community), and work on the layout and set-up of the Kids Activities Booth. They'll also need to draw up a work schedule so that all kids get a chance to rotate through overseeing various activities while still allowing time to enjoy the show themselves.

Back-up page 9.7: Mentoring.

Actually, if any of your kids have been taking the lead on the various activities outlined above, they've already most likely been mentoring!

Becoming a mentor means helping younger or less experienced club members, sharing one's knowledge and experience with them in a specific project, such as how to craft a cab, how to build and curate a collection, how to identify a mineral or fossil, etc. A mentor is someone who is always on hand, ready and willing to lend help and advice as a friendly and sympathetic colleague, someone who has already been through the ropes and who can share from experience.

As new kids join the club, you might consider formally assigning a "buddy" to them from among your more experienced club members—a mentor who shares whatever interest the new club member arrives with and who can help channel and cultivate that interest.

Back-up page 9.8: Recruiting.

One thing is as certain as night following day: kids grow up! And when they do, they often head off in directions that lead them away from an early interest in rocks. That happened in my own life. After collecting fossils since I was knee high to a grasshopper and enrolling in college as a geology major, I switched to humanities, got a job in publishing, and only many years later returned to my early passion.

From my experience (and from some survey work with a local natural history museum), it is mostly kids in the elementary school age bracket who are fascinated and even infatuated with rocks, minerals, and fossils. By junior and senior high school, many things compete for their interest: computers, cell phones, and social media, extracurricular activities (sports, music, drama, etc.), cars, the opposite sex, etc., etc., etc.

The only way to maintain a vibrant youth program is to continually bring in new recruits. For that, turn to your own junior members! This activity is considered accomplished if a youth member brings in a friend who attends at least three meetings.

But a true recruiter does more than just bring a friend along. Anyone working on this activity should also serve as a host or hostess and mentor to introduce the friend to the hobby and to the club in ways that will spur interest and a desire to become a fellow rockhound.

Back-up page 9.9: Fundraising.

Kids should learn where money comes from and the effort it takes to earn it, how to manage it wisely, and how to save for things of value. The following four suggestions for a fundraising activity are intended to help in this effort.

1. Decide how to spend your money. The first step in a fundraising project is determining what you need or want, then finding out how much it will cost. If your club holds a local show, you might take the kids around to the various dealers to see what sorts of things are out there before meeting as a group to decide what to buy. Guide kids to think in terms of things that will benefit the most club members while remaining within a reasonable budget. This could be a piece of lapidary equipment like a rock tumbler that could be filled with stones provided by each child. Or perhaps they'd like to start a library with how-to lapidary books geared to kids. With everyone gathered around a flipchart or whiteboard, toss around and list ideas and take a vote.

2. Set fundraising goals. Once you know what your kids want, you'll be able to determine a target dollar amount to raise. Raising the necessary amount could be a long-term project, with various fundraising activities held over the course of a year. Teach the kids to track their fund via simple, basic accounting. Make a large poster-board thermometer calibrated with dollar amounts leading to their goal, and use it to motivate the kids by keeping both their goal and their progress literally in sight.

3. Determine fundraising activities. In addition to involving kids in decisions about *what* to buy, involve them in decisions about *how* to buy it. After holding a brainstorming session and a vote on what to buy, hold another session on fundraising activities everyone can participate in. For instance: running a Kids' Booth at your local club show; running a Kids Silent Auction; making and selling lapidary crafts; garage, lemonade, and bake sales. To motivate potential customers, kids might make a poster showing what they're planning to purchase with their money and asking customers for help in reaching their goal, showing folks how the money is going to a good cause.

4. Help "give back" to the AFMS. Our AFMS/FRA Badge Program is provided free of charge to participating clubs, but it's not without costs; for instance, mailing badges and materials to all the clubs using the program and—most significantly—manufacturing the badges. I'm happy to provide Certificates of Merit to any clubs contributing to the Badge Program to instill a sense of belonging among youth members.

Teaching the value of money and the long-term vision and patience to save for something worthwhile will help kids learn lessons that will benefit them all their lives.