

How to Attract, Engage & Retain Juniors Best Practices

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1. The Junior Subcommittee

The Juniors Sub-Committee, formed by The Coordinating Committee in June 2020, and composed of one member from each of the Standing Committees, two non-voting ad hoc members, an AKC Staff member, and an AKC Board member was charged with developing a “Best Practice” living document to assist clubs as they attract, engage, and retain Juniors and young adults to the AKC and the sport of Purebred Dogs.

Voting Members

Nancy Fisk, Chair
Anne Bowes
Eddie Dzuik
Sally Fineburg
Blaine Grove
Patty Sample
Dr. Dawn Schroeder
Cindy Stansell
Marjorie Tuff

AKC Committee

All Breed
Parent Club
Canine Health
Herding, Earthdog & Coursing
Field Trial/Hunting Dog Events
Companion Events
Bylaws
Dog Show Rules
Delegate Advocacy and Advancement

Non-Voting Members

Delegates with Extensive Juniors Experience
Wayne Harmon
Jane Wilkinson

Mari-Beth O’Neill, AKC Vice President Sport Services
Dr. Michael Knight, AKC Board Member

2. Why We Need Juniors

First, we looked at why we need Juniors.

- To bring new exhibitors to the sport. In Conformation, Companion and Performance events.
- To build a Breeder Base. Without Breeders our sport cannot continue.
- To have a healthier membership base for clubs. Volunteers are needed for the future of our clubs.
- To deliver our message and reach new people through new . Young people can assist us in delivering positive communication about the sport and their involvement through social media allowing us to reach a broader audience.
- To add new enthusiasts to the Fancy. We know our clubs and our dog sports are losing participants. Our clubs are graying, and membership is declining. Much of our population is urban and far removed from the agrarian life of old where people and animal husbandry existed side by side. Raising, breeding, and caring for

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animals was common-place and valued. Young people today know very little about the history and value of our purebred dogs and are inundated with the “adopt don’t shop” mantra, vilifying our AKC Purebred dog breeders and our sport.

So, what to do?? Educate, educate, educate! But how?

In our committee’s first meetings we reviewed all of the different programs the AKC already has that relate to Juniors. An overview was developed and provided to all clubs in an e-mail sent by Sport Services. Here is the information sent to clubs.

3. The National Junior Organization

The National Junior Organization is the umbrella over all of the AKC Junior Programs. It’s many programs include:

- Processing a number for a Junior
- Recognition of Juniors obtaining titles in Companion and Performance events
- \$60,000 annually in Scholarships for Juniors.
- Junior Versatility Scholarships and Awards
- A Closed Junior Facebook Page monitored by AKC Staff
- Quarterly Junior E-Newsletter
- A Junior Resource Page
- A Junior Mentor Program
- Reduced fees for AKC non-conformation events where a Junior is competing

See the following for a compilation of events, activities and means in which the AKC currently engages with Juniors and external organizations, families or schools.

AKC National Junior Organization (NJO)



Established in 1995:

1. Junior receives an AKC National Junior Organization Pin when they obtain their AKC Junior Number.
2. AKC Junior E-Newsletter- request articles from current Juniors and staff, then and now- interviews- <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn-origin-etr.akc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/12082944/Junior-News-Summer-2019.pdf>

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3. Establishment of AKC Junior Scholarships, first year offered 1998- 2020 \$811,000 awarded to date. The 2020 scholarships: \$22,000 awarded to 10 Juniors, ranging from \$3,00-\$1,000.
4. Recognition of Juniors handling dogs to titles in Companion and Performance Events-
<https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/junior-showmanship/junior-recognition-program/>
 - a. In Companion Events the process has been stream-lined if the Junior's number is on the entry.
 - b. Performance Events, Juniors submit the Junior Handler Certification Form, which is included in the event kits:
<https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn-origin-etr.akc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/11130731/JR-Certification-Form-editable.pdf>
 - c. Juniors receive a certificate for handling a dog to a title, there is a pin with title bars available for Companion Events
5. Junior Versatility Scholarships Awards:
<https://www.akc.org/press-releases/the-american-kennel-club-announces-recipients-of-junior-versatility-award/>

The Junior Versatility program was developed to encourage Juniors to participate in different AKC events. This has been successful, with top conformation Juniors, including the winner of Conformation Juniors in 2017 receiving a Versatility Scholarship.

Developed in 2017 providing a point system for Juniors competing in any AKC Event, to receive points for participation, placements, wins, qualifying scores, etc - Juniors with the highest number of points have competed in a minimum of three different competitive AKC events receive Scholarships.

These Scholarships are funded by donations made through the AKC Humane Fund.

6. Ongoing review, revisions and updates of the Guidelines for Conformation Junior Showmanship- which has included:
 - a. Reducing the minimum age to 9
 - b. Restructuring the classes - into three age groups
 - c. Adding the Master Class
 - d. Revision of transfer fee for a Junior to be added to a dog for \$10
 - e.
7. AKC Junior Facebook Page- This is a closed page- you may be granted permission to join after answering 3 questions.
8. Junior Resource Page - AKC Website: <https://www.akc.org/sports/juniors/>
9. New Junior Scholarships 2020- \$10,000 for Juniors competing in Companion Events and \$10,000 for Juniors competing in Performance Events, \$10,000 to enhance the Scholarships awarded to the finalists and winners in Juniors at the AKC National Championship.
10. Junior Mentor Program. The design of this program is to connect experienced Juniors with Juniors that are interested in learning more about the sport and/or improving their skills.

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- a. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn-origin-etr.akc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/16154826/About-the-Junior-Mentor-Program.pdf>

Clubs Providing Opportunities for Juniors/Youth

1. Junior Membership
2. Any Event may offer entries for Juniors at a reduced fee -
3. Junior Showcase Events: A club may offer Obedience, Rally, Agility or Conformation Junior Showmanship, as a stand - alone event for Juniors only. May be held in conjunction with another AKC Event,
 - i. <https://www.akc.org/sports/juniors/junior-showcase-events/>
4. AKC RHP Junior Clinic and Workshop: <https://www.akc.org/sports/juniors/upcoming-junior-clinics/>
5. Pee Wee Special Attraction: <https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/junior-showmanship/pee-wee-special-attraction-guidelines/>
6. Offer Scholarship for Best Junior/ Best Junior in Cluster. This could be adapted to any Companion or Performance Event.
7. Offer Regional Competition: CA State, Northwest Regional, MN, New England, Mid-South at the following shows:
 - i. Sun Maid Kennel Club, Rose City Cluster in Portland, Land O'Lakes KC, Springfield Cluster in November, Louisville KC
8. Offer Seminars and Workshops: either in conjunction with shows or independent of show- invite Juniors to attend, participate and assist
9. Juniors as stewards
10. Offer the AKC Education Patch Program

4-H Outreach

4-H is community based, with state and county programs. The AKC CGC Test is in one of the 4-H Canine Workbooks, we gather contact information for leaders from the submission of CGC Tests.

- 1) Communicate regularly (bi-monthly) with compiled list of 4-H leaders
- 2) Special Form for 4-H Members, to obtain an AKC Junior Number, and enroll their dog for a PAL or CP number if the dog is not AKC registered for free.
- 3) Provide information and materials to leaders, AKC will process PAL, CP, CGC and Trick Titles for free for 4-H
- 4) Coordination of AKC Ambassador or staff to attend 4-H Dog Competition at State Fairs

In 2019- there were AKC Ambassadors or AKC staff at 10 events – offering materials, assisting with CGC, Tricks, Judging and accepting applications and assisting in providing resources.

- 5) Provide 4-H Leaders with the information on the Virtual activities and the forms to submit.- Tricks can be submitted directly to: Juniors@akc.org

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- 6) [AKC Junior Ambassador Program: The AKC Junior Ambassador Program aims to more fully engage Juniors in the sport of purebred dog, as well as give clubs more resources to engage Juniors in their areas. For those Juniors that are currently competing, this program seeks to help them be more active in the sport. This program also allows 4-H members to expand their knowledge and participation in dog sports.](#)

[Education is a part of this program- Juniors may take any course offered in AKC Canine College for free- they obtain a login code from the Public Education Department,](#)

http://images.akc.org/pdf/Junior_Ambassador_Brochure.pdf

- 7) 4- H outreach involvement: Jane Wilkerson - person who developed the Junior Showcase concept and Wayne Harmon- extensive outreach in MN

Public Education – Opportunities for Clubs

Staff works collaboratively with the Public Education Department and encourages clubs, teachers and youth to utilize the opportunities made available by the department:

The mission of AKC Education is to provide dog fanciers, dog owners and the general public, quality education about purebred dogs, the sport of purebred dogs and the ongoing importance of the relationships between people and canines.

<https://www.akc.org/public-education/>

AKC Canine Clubs

AKC PupPals Program

AKC Kids News

AKC Breed of the Week for Kids

AKC Virtual Patch Program

AKC Art Contests

Canine Clubs- Community Dogs

<https://www.akc.org/public-education/akc-canine-clubs-community-dogs/>

Educator Resources -lesson plans and articles that can be utilized by teachers and after school groups, or perhaps as activities at an event:

<https://www.akc.org/public-education/educator-resources/>

Most importantly, does your Club have a Junior Membership? If not please consider adding it.

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a. AKC National Junior Organization Video

Video overview of the AKC National Junior Organization. Runtime 3:25. If the sound is not on check to be sure the video is not muted (megaphone symbol) on the bottom left corner of your screen.

<https://akc.tv/watch/19/6874/video-3/akc-juniors-organization?ctx=/watch//4/2026/series/intro-to-akc>

4. Junior & Young Adult Club Membership

If your club does not have a Junior Membership, please consider adding one: age 18-21 years of age – upon proof of continuing education, the date the membership will automatically convert to regular membership will be age 21. Youth Membership will be a non-voting/non office holding type membership. For Clubs with Junior Memberships:

a. Bylaws

One way to encourage juniors is to change your bylaws to allow juniors to become members of your club.

Even if your state of incorporation does not allow persons under 18 to vote, the junior can become a functioning member of your club. The following language allows them to participate as fully as possible without voting or holding office (this requires a vote).

We did not endorse the language that some clubs use which says that the junior automatically converts to a regular member upon reaching their 18th birthday. Our language requires a bit more housekeeping by asking the junior to fill out another application upon reaching their 18th birthday. This approach has several advantages. One is that there may be another type of membership (other than regular) that better fits their needs. Another is that the club could be better protected if the information in the application contained incorrect information or if the individual was knowingly disregarding the Club's Code of Ethics.

We are concerned about the time the junior is away at college. This time is spent on academics and social awakening and there may be limited opportunity to participate in a club or in the sport. We wanted to retain their sense of community during this time to encourage them to become active again when they graduate. For that reason we created a "Youth Membership" separate from the "Junior Member."

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Members without Full privileges. These members do not count in the quorum, do not vote, do not hold office, and do not sponsor applicants for membership. They may hold committee membership; however, they may not chair a committee and they have no vote in the committee. They will receive club publications.

i. **Junior Member.** Shall be open to all persons between the ages of ten and seventeen. Upon reaching eighteen years of age, Junior members must reapply for another class of membership and pay the difference in dues. Junior members failing to apply for another membership class within six (6) months after their 18th birthday, shall have their membership automatically lapse.

ii. **Youth Member.** Shall be open to all persons between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one who are full-time students at a university or college. Upon reaching twenty-one years of age or upon completion of the post-secondary degree, whichever occurs first, Youth members must reapply for another class of membership and pay the difference in dues. Youth members failing to apply for another membership class within six months of the expiration of this class of membership, shall have their membership automatically lapse.

Clubs may assess different dues *per class of membership*. The committee recommends that the club waive the dues for these classes of membership.

b. Acknowledge Your Juniors

Clubs with Junior Memberships can encourage involvement by acknowledging their participation in any AKC Event. AKC Staff developed the Junior Recognition Program that awards points for participation, qualifying scores, legs, placements and wins. The results may be reviewed on AKC Web Site by a searchable database. Utilizing this data base, we encourage you to then recognize the Juniors in your club for participating in AKC Events.

c. Junior Recognition Program Points Summary

This listing displays the points of Juniors based on competition type and Breed. It includes the following events: Agility, Coonhound, Coursing, Earthdog, Field Trial, Herding, Hunting Test, Junior Showmanship, Obedience, Rally, Scentwork, Title Recognition Program and Tracking. ACT titles will be included in Agility, Fast CAT and CAT are included with Coursing, Herding Test, Trial and Farm Dog are included in Herding; and Title Recognition Program includes AKC Temperament Test (ATT), Barn Hunt, Canine Good Citizen, Disc Dog, Dock

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Diving, Flyball, Parent Club and Working Dog, Search and Rescue, Trick Dog and Therapy Dog titles.

d. The Junior Recognition Program Searchable Data Base Link:

<https://www.apps.akc.org/apps/junior-recognition-program/>

e. Club Activities To Engage Juniors

- Include seminars and workshops at your show or at club meetings which are of interest to juniors. Find ways to encourage young people to attend. Perhaps establish a point system for attendance.
- Mentor Juniors in club roles
- Allow them to take on responsibility and be a part of the Club Community.
- Reward them with praise and recognition. Consider rewards like Club Member scholarships.
- Educate them on club and event roles like: stewarding, grounds layout, set up, break down, hospitality, social media, committee roles, etc

5. Junior Coordinator: Club Role

The AKC Board approved the role of a Junior Coordinator for **every Club**. The person filling this role is to be submitted with the officers from each club as the Judges Education Coordinator and Public Education Coordinator. This will allow the AKC to communicate with the individual in this role.

Recommended that every club consider having a Junior Membership

We know that numbers of clubs already do good things for Juniors. We appreciate their efforts and learn from their successes. However, there are too many other clubs that find themselves unable or unwilling to attempt to bring young people into their clubs.

In order to provide clubs with the encouragement and assistance they may require as they take the first steps to bring junior members into their clubs, we realize that we need a better way to communicate all that AKC offers in the way of support.

To assist with that communication, we asked the AKC Board to consider adding a “Junior Coordinator” to the list of official Club Positions. The contact information for this position would then be available on the Club Officer’s site, alongside the Legislative Liaison and Public Relations Coordinators, giving AKC the ability to share pertinent Junior related information directly, more easily, and more effectively with the club appointed “Junior Coordinator.

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a. Parent Club Junior Coordinator – Suggested Activities

The coordinator may wish to form a committee to assist in handling the development of opportunities for Juniors with the breed, the following are suggestions:

- Contact person for Junior members
- Coordinate activities Juniors participating at the National Specialty which might include: handling clinic, introduction to other events, grooming clinic, invite to attend judges education seminar, breeder education seminar, social gathering and or outing, goodie bags.
- Maintain list of Juniors competing with the Breed in all events
- Coordinate stipends provided to Juniors competing at Westminster and AKC National Championship Junior Events.
- Coordinate the awarding of Scholarships for education to Juniors who competed with the breed.
- Provide information for the Parent Club Web site about the Junior activities.
- Coordinate the highlighting of Juniors in Club publications.
- Contact for those who may offer a dog to a Junior
- Coordinate recognition and awards for Juniors that have competed in any event with the breed.
- Reaching out to Juniors who may have the breed who are not Junior members.
- Provide guidance to local Specialty Clubs to enhance activities for Juniors
- Include Juniors in opportunities where the breed is being represented: Meet The Breeds
- Establish Mentorship with officers of the club for Juniors to learn the roles of other positions.
- Coordinate Juniors participating in the Companion or Performance Events to assist with the events at the National.
- Coordinate volunteer activities for Juniors, throughout the year as well as at the National: assist with social media, set up of any of the different events, monitor raffle, catalog sales, grooming space- etc.

b. All Breed Clubs Junior Coordinator – Suggested Activities:

- All above for consideration
- Involving Junior Members in Public Education activities
- Work with the Public Education Coordinators for involvement with youth groups and schools.

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- Encourage youth to join the club and participate as Junior Members.
 - Teaching Junior Members to steward to assist at the club's All Breed Events.
 - Coordinate the conducting of Junior Showcase events

c. Companion Event Clubs (Obedience and Agility Clubs) Junior Coordinator – Suggested Activities:

- All above for consideration
- Become involved with your 4-H obedience program for your county.
- Allowing 4-H/Juniors to participate in your classes free of charge.
- Sponsor trophies for the 4-H obedience county fair show.
- Invite 4-H/Juniors to attend free of charge any club sponsored seminars.
- Invite 4-H/Juniors and their family to club's Annual Awards Dinner, and to honor each child an award for any AKC Titles that they may have earned.
- Reduced entry fee/ or no entry fee if club can afford for Junior's entering your trials.
- Sponsor Junior Showcase event.
- Mentor the 4-H children/Juniors in the various events they will be participating in.
- Educate the 4-H/Junior on becoming a steward at your events
- Encourage participation from the 4-H/ Junior's parents
- Assign a 4-H/Junior to mentor with Trial Secretary, Trial Chairmen, and Chief Ring Steward for your events.
- Assist any 4-H child who does not have the resources to participate in their local 4-H obedience, rally, agility, and conformation program.
- Assist any 4-H/Junior with finding a breeder who is willing to allow the child to participate with one of their dogs.
- Encourage your local All-Breed club to be sure and select a judge for Junior Showmanship who really enjoys judging Juniors.
- Training of junior members to assist with set up and bread down of events
- Train to assist in ringside assistance for the events
- Train to assist in stewarding these events
- Assist Juniors to become involved in all aspects of putting on an event.
- Coordinating the conducting of Junior Showcase Events.

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d. Performance Events Junior Coordinator – Suggested Activities:

- All of above to be considered
- Training Juniors to assist in setting up the event
- Training Juniors to provide assistance in conducting the event
- Training Juniors on how the event is applied for and results submitted.
- Educate Juniors on the purpose of the breed and how Field Trials, Hunt test and bench shows test the abilities that are required to perform their bred purposes.
- Sporting dogs and hounds are hunting dogs. Organize events using the dogs for their purpose. Many states have special days and areas set aside for junior hunting.
- Develop a relationship with state officials that create and maintain sporting activities for Juniors.
- Create family social activities around events, cookouts, weekend camping.
- Educate juniors on purposes for their sporting dogs, other than their bred purpose such as the Beagle Brigade and Detection dog task force.
- [Perspectives](#)

6. The Next Generation! Promoting Breeding to Juniors

It is critical to attract, engage and retain Juniors' involvement in breeding. They are our future and will be shepherding in the next generations of our fancy. Without the "next generation" of breeders, there won't be a "next generation" of dogs.

The best practices provide below are designed to assist Parent and All Breed Clubs but can be adapted for those of you in other clubs with a desire to promote breeding to your members. One way to look at breeders as being critical to our future, is to look at dogs that are being bred to do specific jobs for which they were developed. Performance Clubs are truly an expression of just that. Working, field and hunt test dogs are very obviously doing what they were bred to do.

Although all of our clubs need to keep this in focus and actively engage in encouraging young people to breed and compete with their own bred-by dogs, it falls to the Parent Clubs to take charge here.

- Set up a Club Mentoring Program for Juniors - a system where Club Members can connect with Juniors for the following activities:
 - Allowing Juniors to watch all aspects of breeding with an experienced breeder in their area, including but not limited to:
 - Whelping a litter

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- Puppy evaluations
- Temperament testing
- Puppy party
- Mentoring Juniors about breeding.
- Co-owning a breedable bitch with a Junior and walk them through the process.
- Co-owning a promising class dog or Champion with a Junior who will show this dog in Conformation and Owner-Handled classes.
- Have club programs that talk about breeding.
- Encourage Juniors to Steward at shows, particularly the BBE classes. Set up training program and/or system to for Juniors to learn how to Steward from experienced, friendly mentors (include in your Club Mentoring Program for Juniors).
- Inquire from Juniors in your Club and at your Shows about what information they would like related to breeding and showing those puppies in BBE. How can the club help them in their pursuits within the fancy? Create programs addressing the Juniors' comments/suggestions.

a. Suggestions For Creating a Club Mentoring Program for Juniors – a system to connect Mentor Volunteers and Juniors:

- Have your Club's Junior Coordinator and/or another Volunteer(s) solicit Mentor Volunteers and collate on a spreadsheet or, if possible, an interactive Google doc.
 - Detail topic areas within which the volunteers are available to mentor or participate, for example; breeding, stewarding, handling, co-owning opportunities, volunteer has a dog(s) they would like to place with a Junior, performance sports, conditioning, presentation of Junior/dog, etc.
 - Update document as your Club gains new Mentors and Juniors.
 - Update the topic areas as your program evolves and you acquire more information and interests from Juniors
- Communicate your Club Mentoring Program for Juniors
 - Place announcement and/or link to sign up document on your Club communications as well as Facebook page and Website inviting Juniors to either reach out to the Junior Coordinator/Volunteer(s) or sign up on the interactive document to be matched with a mentor.
 - Provide handouts with details at Dog shows and other Club events.
 - Investigate if you can include in your Premium Lists and Show Catalogs.
 - Email invites with details to community organizations targeting parents and children, like local schools, 4-H Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.

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- Be sure the Volunteer(s) overseeing the Junior Mentor Program document reaches out and connects the appropriate volunteer with the Junior seeking guidance.
 - If you create an interactive document, you may investigate creating permission with your Mentor Volunteers to have the Juniors who select them make direct contact. The Volunteer should be sure to oversee activity to confirm communication is completed successfully.
- If you develop additional methods you find effective connecting Mentors and Juniors, please submit to Juniors@akc.org so your ideas can be shared with other Clubs.
- **B. Breeding for Form and Function: The Beagle Group Example**

[LINK TO PERSPECTIVES ARTICLE ON BEAGLERS](#)

7. Junior Showmanship Regulations

The Regulations for Junior Showmanship can be found by clicking the link below:

<https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/REJRSH.pdf>

Conformation Junior Showmanship Regulations continue to be revised to meet changing needs and to become more inclusive. The most recent changes, updated in 2021, include the following:

- Reducing the minimum age to nine
- Restructuring the classes offered from two age groups to three and having a three-year age spread per class
- Adding the Master Class - allowing more Juniors to meet the criteria for the AKC National Championship or other limited Shows
- Reducing the transfer fee to add a Junior to a dog to \$10
- AKC continues to not charge a recording fee for Junior Showmanship
- Establishing Pee Wee Special Attraction
- Pilot Program allowing Canine Partners in Junior Showmanship effective 1/1/2022. This is an opt out option for clubs. See more details under Point #13 Junior Canine Partner Dogs.

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The AKC has either eliminated, or reduced fees associated with Juniors. Entry fees are a big issue with Junior participants and their parents. Review your club and show finances to see if you can afford to reduce or to eliminate Junior entry fees.

8. Judges and Stewards For Juniors

One very important thing for Clubs to consider is choosing your Junior Judges and stewards. They are critical in making for a positive experience and encouraging youngsters to come back and try it again.

Please make sure your judge truly wants to judge these classes because they like and respect the Juniors exhibitors. There are many currently licensed judges, both newer as well as seasoned, who love judging Juniors. You can also consider using aged out Juniors, or Handlers as judges. The Junior Exhibitors know who cares about them and who takes their judging assignment seriously, and as an honor.

Also make sure your stewards are Junior friendly and will take the time to help new exhibitors or inexperienced young people. It is imperative that the Junior Exhibitor ring be a friendly place and Junior Exhibitors leave the ring having had a good experience... win or lose.

Good Sportsmanship and pleasant demeanor must be the order of the day!!

9. Junior Showcase Events

Junior Showcase events are a great way to reach out to Juniors and expand your audience by including 4-H members. It also provides an opportunity to register new youngsters by providing free AKC Junior's, Canine Partner and PAL numbers. The events are designed to be a comfortable, welcoming introduction to AKC events all offered at a nominal fee. Your event may include one or all of the following: Conformation (Junior Showmanship), Agility, Obedience, Rally. You can also offer free Trick Dog, CGC and Agility ACT1 and ACT2 titles.

a. Background on Junior Showcase Events

Many years ago clubs involved in the Thanksgiving Classic Cluster Shows in Massachusetts arranged to hold separate Obedience Trials for Juniors

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and members of local 4-H Dog Clubs in an effort to encourage younger people to be involved in AKC events.

The clubs offered a separate Obedience trial, Novice classes only, for 4-H Dog Club members and AKC Juniors. Ironically adults attempted to enter the trials which were designated for Juniors only. To eliminate confusion in the future, the AKC, through Mari-Beth O'Neil - Vice President Sports Services and former Junior handler, created Junior Showcase Events in an effort to attract and engage young people in AKC sports.

b. Junior Showcase Obedience and Rally Trial Example

Provided by Joyce Wilkinson, AKC Delegate Holyoke Kennel Club, Inc.

Since we began to hold the Junior Showcase events, we have found that these young people liked the Junior Showcase Rally Trials best since Rally Novice and Intermediate Classes are on leash. The entries of our Junior Showcase Rally Trials before COVID had reached over 30 entries per trial with AKC Juniors and 4-H Dog Club members participating. We have had many titles earned in Rally and Obedience by the 4-H Dog Club members who have now embraced our sport. Many Juniors and 4-H members who age out, continue to exhibit in the regular Obedience and Rally events at our show.

c. Steps For Holding A Junior Obedience or Rally Showcase Event

- A volunteer from your club acts as Trial Secretary and submits the Junior Showcase application to AKC for the Obedience or Rally Trial. Classes offered can be limited if your club elects. For instance, your club can choose to only offer Rally Novice or Novice Obedience to target beginning exhibitors. AKC does not charge the event fee of \$50 for Rally and \$15 for Obedience for Junior Showcase events.
- Determine if you would like to offer free CGC testing or a chance to earn Trick Dog titles for free.
- Obtaining a judge for these events has proved to be easy. There are many Rally and Obedience Judges who love to work with youth and will volunteer to judge these events for free.
- Create a Premium List and distributed via email to all the local 4-H Clubs and AKC Juniors. We recommend asking the AKC to post the PL on the Juniors Facebook page. Note: begin to generate contacts and develop a database of clubs and individuals to email prior to the event.

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- We recommend a nominal entry fee of \$5-\$10. Entry fees are big issue with Junior participants and their parents. Review your club and show finances to see if you can afford to reduce or to eliminate Junior entry fees.
- Your club volunteer Trial Secretary should receive and process the entries. We recommend you develop a system to organize the entries. Some clubs have used a simple loose-leaf notebook with plastic page dividers to place each entry in as it arrives. Each class has a separate section in the notebook.
- Facilitate securing appropriate registration numbers so those entrants not registered with the AKC can participate. This is a great chance to assist 4-H members obtain a Junior's number and/or a Canine Partners or PAL number for their dog. AKC has provided this free of charge for 4-H Dog Club members.
- Once entries close, send an email confirmation to each exhibitor with the judging schedule, directions to the show and building and crating information.
- Create a catalog for the event. Be sure to make copies and offer for free to each exhibitor the day of the show.
- Prior to the trial, create the judge's books and arrange to have volunteers steward for the event.
- Purchase Ribbons and trophies. There are many resources available. Some clubs have used the AKC as a source for trophies..
- On the day of the trial, be prepared to welcome the Junior Showcase Exhibitors! Set up a crating area as well as a table with a volunteer(s) where exhibitors can pick up their catalog and ask questions.

d. Junior Showcase Conformation Event Example

The Fiesta Dog Shows held in Arizona has put on events for Juniors at the All-breed shows for a number of years. The Junior three-day event begins with no fee entries for the Friday through Sunday. There are no Junior events on Monday. On set-up day a "Juniors Only" area is sectioned-off near the Junior Showmanship Ring with enough room for both people and dogs. The club pays special attention to the Juniors judges. It is important that the competitors are respected, and the Judge is willing to engage with the Juniors. Judges should be willing to answer questions and offer comment at the appropriate time.

On Saturday, an educational program is presented, and lunch is provided. Sunday is the culmination of the three-day event. After the regular competition is finished, the competition for Grand Best Junior begins. Any Junior who has won their class during the weekend at the All-breeds and the Juniors who have achieved the title of Best Junior at the specialties are

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eligible to compete. Three knowledgeable individuals are selected to judge the competition. (Judges who have judged Juniors in any of the regular classes are not eligible to judge the Grand Best Junior competition.) The Junior with the best score wins. We have seen young Juniors win over older competitors from the Master's class. There is a special prize for the winner.

SPECIAL EVENTS FOR JUNIORS! *Fiesta Junior Showmanship Classic* *Compete for Grand Best Junior*

- Junior Showmanship Class winners from Friday, Saturday and Sunday are eligible to compete on Sunday for the title of the Grand Best Junior of the weekend – FREE!
- Grand Best Junior Finals - Sunday, November 28 will be comprised of a 3-person judging panel.
- GBJ Finals judging will take place at 11:00am Indoor Ring 1.
- The Grand Best Junior winner will be announced in the group ring prior to group judging on Sunday

Junior Showmanship Luncheon and Handling Clinic **Saturday, November 27, 2021**

- Complimentary lunch for Juniors on Saturday, November 27th at 11:00am in Juniors Hospitality Area
- Complimentary Lunch and Speaker followed by a Handling Clinic with focus on improving skills
- All skill levels welcome, no minimum age
- Register at the Juniors Ring on Friday, November 26
- **NOTE: Both the Luncheon and Clinic are subject to cancellation if Covid requirements are changed by the facility**

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e. AKC Obedience, Rally and Agility Events Contacts

Companion Events – Regulation Questions

Phone _____ (919) 816-3821

Email _____ agility@akc.org

Email _____ Obedience@akc.org

Email _____ rally@akc.org

f. Junior Showcase AKC Application Links

- [Junior Showcase Agility Event application](#)
- [Junior Showcase Obedience Event application](#)
- [Junior Showcase Rally Event application](#)
- [Junior Showcase Junior Showmanship Event application](#)

10. Reaching Out to 4-H Club Members

When reaching out to 4-H Dog Project groups it is easiest to start with club members and local training centers. 4-H has many of the same issues that AKC clubs have such as: retention of new exhibitors, volunteers for activities and handing off club positions to younger members for mentoring. Other youth organizations are also looking for new activities with the AKC Fit Dog program perfect for so many.

a. Creating a Relationship with Local 4-H Clubs Example

The Cambridge, Minnesota Kennel Club started working with our county program in small ways. We offered them our older equipment when we replaced with newer and offered to buy materials so the kids could make their own equipment. We offered to provide trainers for an AKC Showmanship event

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during their weekly practices. This led to our club donating trophies to the county show and eventually to the state show. Each step was initiated by us.

Eventually they became comfortable with the working relationship and started networking with us. We were usually able to assist with mats and equipment for training. Often, we would provide evaluators for matches. Our area has many community festivals and kid's fairs. Many of the local businesses would have booths with giveaways for the young people. We started having a club booth that provided AKC information, dog food samples and other items that we could scrounge from nationals held in the Midwest. AKC has an excellent program in conjunction with RDO (Responsible Dog Ownership) Day. They would send materials for free as handouts. 4-H dog project participants were invited to demonstrate agility and obedience activities. These participants eventually became ring stewards for our all-breed shows. We have also offered a variety of Junior Showcase events in which 4-H was invited. The most successful was a 4-H match with obedience, rally and CGC using 4-H leaders. 4-H participants received CGC for free and all-breed exhibitors paid for the CGC titles. In this manner 4-H leaders were able to cover for their costs for the day.

Our connection with the 4-H county programs grew and we eventually assisted in several surrounding counties. For the two closest counties we offered microchips for each of the new members with the cooperation of local veterinarians. Often, we were able to provide "swag" to the different counties as long as they sent a picture of the group (no identifying information was permitted) other than a "thank you" note.

Out of nowhere, Mari-Beth O'Neill, AKC Vice President Sport Services, reached out to us and asked us to assist with an AKC booth at the 2018 Minnesota 4-H Dog Project State Show (over 1200 entries). With materials provided by AKC we registered over 90 dogs. AKC bandanas were given to each applicant.

We followed the September State Show with a 2019 4-H Super Session in which 19 ACT I, 22 CGC and 17 Trick Dogs were awarded. 19 new dogs were registered as well as 2 new Junior applications. At the 2019 Minnesota Dog Project State Show 70 new dogs were registered with two Junior applications. 88 CGC and 10 CGC-A titles were awarded as well as 86 Trick Dog - Novice, 13 Trick Dog - Intermediate and 1 Trick Dog titles were awarded. All 2020 events were held virtually. For the 2021 Minnesota Dog Project State Show entries were down to 900. 35 new dogs were registered, 54 CGC, 2 CGC-A and 5 CGC-U titles were awarded. Trick Dog- Novice - 21, Trick Dog - Intermediate - 8 and Trick Dog - Advanced 9 titles were awarded. On each of these events AKC awarded titles to the 4-H participants at no expense. The only expenses incurred by the club was for food/water and a "thank you" gift to the evaluators.

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The activities are extremely rewarding as a positive face for AKC and networking to a whole new group of people that love dogs.

b. 4-H Activities

There are many engaging 4-H activities you can incorporate in your clubs. Here are details on Quiz Bowl.

Quiz Bowl

In the New England State 4-H Dog Club Program, Quiz Bowl is one of the popular 4-H Dog club activities. Each year the 4-H Program leaders from Massachusetts, Ct, RI, Vt and New Hampshire meet during the summer to decide what will be study each year. One of the AKC Groups is always part of the material studied as well as AKC events which this group of dogs participate in. There is always a general dog glossary of terms to be studied along with other areas, for example anatomy and the canine organ systems.

The 4-H Dog Club members study this information in their dog knowledge meetings, which are held at least once a month. Zoom was used during COVID to work on learning this information. Games like Kahoots and Jeopardy were used to prepare for Quiz Bowl. Quiz bowl practice begins when we do in person meetings using buzzers to buzz in to give the correct answer.

At the New England 4-H dog Show at the Eastern States Exposition Big E Fair, the 4-H dog club members from each state form Quiz Bowl Teams. Prior to the Quiz Bowl competition, all the 4-H members take their dog knowledge test. The following day, in the afternoon after the dog competition Showmanship & Obedience, the Quiz Bowl competition is held. All the 4-H members watch and support their teams. Six placings are awarded to the top six teams with all members of the team receiving a rosette and trophy. This activity has helped young people enjoy learning new information and learn more about dogs.

11. Involving 4-H Dog Club Members in Junior Showmanship:

Reaching out to local 4-H clubs is a great opportunity to reach young people already involved with dogs and introduce them to the AKC. One way to do this is to offer a 4-H

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Junior Showmanship event. The event is exclusively for 4-H Dog Club members and their 4-H project dog.

Offering a free AKC Registered Handlers Clinic prior to the 4-H Junior Showmanship event, is a great way to let the 4-H juniors understand showmanship and practice with their dogs.

Some clubs have had great success with this program! One club reported they had 52 entries at their 2019 event. Plus, many of the 4-H members have transitioned into the AKC Juniors program. Additionally, many converted from Canine Partners dogs to AKC registered dogs.

a. Steps for Holding a 4-H Junior Showmanship Event

- Send an entry flyer to local 4-H Clubs inviting them to the event. Develop a list of local clubs and contact information prior to the event.
- We recommend a free AKC Registered Handler's Clinic prior to the 4-H Showmanship event so that these exhibitors can practice if your club elects.
- Facilitate securing AKC registration numbers. This is a great chance to assist 4-H members obtain a Junior's number and/or a Canine Partners or PAL number for their dog. AKC has provided this free of charge for 4-H Dog Club members.
- Other clubs have been successful dividing the classes by age group using the same groupings as the AKC and then by Novice or Open level. As the entries are received, sort them by class.
- Once entries close, send an email confirmation to each exhibitor with the judging schedule, directions to the show and building and crating information.
- Create a catalog for the event. Be sure to make copies and offer for free to each exhibitor the day of the event.
- Prior to the trial, create the judge's books.
- Determine if you plan to offer and ribbons or trophies. It is not necessary but if you elect to provide some kind of award there are many resources available.
- On the day of the trial, be prepared to welcome the 4-H Junior Showmanship Exhibitors! Set up a crating area as well as a table with a volunteer(s) where exhibitors can pick up their catalog and ask questions.

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12. Junior Canine Partner Dogs

Canine Partners Being Exhibited in Junior Showmanship

The AKC Board approved at the January 2021 Meeting a proposal submitted by the Delegate Junior Sub-Committee and AKC Staff, an 18-month Pilot Program allowing Canine Partners to be exhibited in Junior Showmanship. The dog must have an AKC Canine Partner number and meet the ownership eligibility criteria. The Junior will include the breed the dog is being exhibited as on the entry form in the breed designation space. Eligibility of Canine Partners to be entered in Conformation Junior Showmanship is limited to all-breed shows or events holding all-breed Junior Showmanship. The Judging Operations Department will be providing procedural information to all breed Junior Showmanship Judges.

The implementation of allowing Juniors to handle AKC Canine Partners will allow new young people and their families the opportunity to participate in an AKC Conformation Event, supporting the future of clubs and events. This will present clubs the opportunity to recruit new members and provide mentorship to the Junior and their family.

The effective date is January 1, 2022. The impact of the pilot program will be assessed at the end of the pilot program.

13. Pee Wee Special Attraction

Consider a Pee Wee Special Attraction at your show. It is a fantastic way to include young children between the ages of 5 years and 9 years old and their families.

While children younger than five cannot participate in the Pee Wee Class Special Attraction, a club may want to offer other Special Attractions to engage children. Some clubs offer a special attraction which allows children (including those younger than five) to “show” their stuffed/toy dogs. If the club wants to offer this type of Special Attraction, they must submit a [Special Attractions Form](#).

Click on the link for more details:

<https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/junior-showmanship/pee-wee-special-attraction-guidelines/>

14. AKC Programs Available to bring Juniors and Families to your show

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There are many AKC programs available in clubs to bring Juniors and Families to the shows and events.

- Patch Program, Meet the Breeds, Student Art Contests, “My Dog Can Do That”, Dog Show Tours
- Resources: [AKC Education – American Kennel Club](#)

15. Suggested Junior Participation Activities

This is a list of many suggestions to increase Junior participation in your club at your events, in no particular order.

- Reduced entry rate or offer for free
- Rosettes for class placements
- reduced entry fees
- Junior handling classes
- scholarship programs
- Combined junior competitions – specialties/cluster all breeds
- Offer classes at noon for higher attendance
- reduced club membership fees
- Junior activities coordinator for all-breed clubs
- training classes
- AKC Junior Mentor program
- offer show clothing programs
- Collect used equipment for juniors
- coordinate with 4-H activities
- Offer AKC Junior Showcase
- offer prizes that are relevant to juniors
- Junior member organizations
- offer Pee Wee class
- Awards/plaques
- Offer ACT, CGC, CGC-U, Trick dog for juniors – reduced or free
- Coordinate ACTCGC CGC, Trick Dog titling with 4-H clubs
- Offer training for 4-H at your show
- Promote participation in AKC Fit Dog
- Offer prizes for juniors at obedience, rally, agility, etc
- Promote AKC Junior Ambassador program
- Hire recently approved Junior judges (previous juniors)
- Host regional classes/competition
- adult mentor programs

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- Participation prizes/gifts for all juniors
- promote co-ownership of dogs for juniors
- Bring dogs to junior training classes
- Scholarships
- invite 4-H
- Ask young members to be active members
- Patch program
- 4-H volunteers at show
- youth classes – at all levels
- Junior Showcase
- Junior Showmanship at specialties
- Schedule JS late in the day- encourage participation
- Invite Scouts
- offer PeeWee classes
- Schedule kid events with prizes
- visit schools
- Donate dog books to libraries
- schedule dog talks at libraries
- Have youth events at RDO's
- youth group fundraisers
- Special classes for youth
- breakfast at the show for Juniors
- Start JS classes one half hour before starting conformation classes
- Invite 4-H groups
- tours for scouts
- Local youth group participation
- engage youth in club activities
- Invite schools that have community service programs in which students need to earn hours
- Demonstrations at local and county fairs
- age-appropriate prizes
- Outreach at local pet food stores – meet the breed/breeds
- Age appropriate/nice prizes for JS
- Junior committee in club
- Education/Information booths in community
- Youth Clinics (Isaac Walton League)
- Members sponsor JS entry fee
- Youth as stewards/info booth
- Junior Clinics
- Food tickets for JS participants

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- Dog demos at libraries
- reduced membership fee
- Seminars for new juniors
- handling classes
- 4-H volunteers at the club match
- award system for juniors
- Approach regional agricultural schools
- offer assistance to FFA programs
- Junior Lounge at the show
- grooming clinic
- Mock hunt test/field fundays/agility funday
- Copies of “If I Ran the Dog Show” available for children
- AKC promotional brochures at show
- Educational Seminars- various kid days
- Having juniors being mentored to be judges – fun matches
- Public Education booth at community events
- coloring books
- Distribute Junior information
- Offer FastCAT, Barn Hunt, Farm Dog, CGC, Pet Tricks, Scentwork, Agility, Obedience, Rally, Hunt events

16. Community Outreach

An effective way to bring the message about the AKC and Dog Sport is for a club or individual reach out to the Community..

Some suggestions on ways to reach out:

- Hold an RDO day. Include many kid related activities.
<https://www.akc.org/sports/responsible-dog-ownership-days/hosting-akc-responsible-dog-ownership-day-event/>
- Consider taking a formal program to your local school to educate the kids about AKC sport. Listen to AKC Board Member Dr. Michael Knight share successful experiences reaching out to children in his community in this video beginning at 16:45. <https://vimeo.com/616209212/52bb5e8403>
- Take part as a club, particularly with kids and dogs in local parades, fairs, etc. Be seen with well trained dogs and make yourselves and your clubs available to assist dog loving community members. Wear your club logo attire.

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- Take the “Safety Around Dogs” presentation to local groups like, Schools, Scout troops, Church groups, Public Libraries, After School Day Care groups, etc. This is an easy way to get your club seen while helping to educate kids about safety around dogs. <https://www.akc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Safety-Around-Dogs-Parent-Guide-1.pdf>
<https://www.akc.org/public-education/safety-around-dogs/>
- Think about hosting a “pet (dog) parade” for your town. Easy to do and lots of fun. Also have your club start a Fit Dog program for local dog owners, including kids. <https://www.akc.org/sports/akc-family-dog-program/akc-fit-dog/>
- Do “training classes/demos” in local parks with handlers wearing club attire. Invite kids to watch and suggest they come to your club to work with their dogs. Hold CGC/trick dog testing at public places to entice kids with dogs.
- Work with your local shelter on projects. Make sure you publicize this and encourage kids to join in. Kids love to volunteer in this type of outreach and it can be used as an educational opportunity for your club.

17. Host a Junior Club

If your Club is ready for a larger commitment, consider hosting a Junior Club. Click on the video for an overview of what is involved, beginning at 33:20.

<https://vimeo.com/616209212/52bb5e8403>

18. Social Media Links To AKC Club Development Channels

AKC Club Development has multiple social media channels which clubs are becoming more and more comfortable using. It’s a great space for people to share ideas. Please consider signing up and gaining insight into what is being shared.

https://www.facebook.com/akcclubdevelopment/?modal=admin_todo_tour

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AKCClubDevelopment/>

<https://twitter.com/CLUBSAKC>

<https://www.instagram.com/clubdevelopment/>

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19. Juniors Videos

A comprehensive overview of how to bring Juniors into AKC Sports and Events with a variety of activities your club can implement including ideas of how to reach out to youth in your communities, developed by the AKC Coordinating Committee's Juniors Subcommittee. Runtime 42 minutes:24 seconds.

<https://vimeo.com/616209212/52bb5e8403>

An introduction to the AKC National Juniors Organization detailing ways youth and their dogs can become involved with AKC Sports and Events. Runtime 3 minutes:25 seconds.

<https://akc.tv/watch/19/6874/video-3/akc-juniors-organization?ctx=/watch//4/2026/series/intro-to-akc>