

4-H Power of YOUth

4-H is the youth development program of our nation's Cooperative Extension System.



An infant is secured in a car seat provided through a local loaner program to improve safety.

Delaware Youth Outreach for Traffic Safety

After reviewing data from the Delaware Office of Highway Safety, youth in Georgetown learned the number of pedestrian fatalities in Sussex County has declined since 2006 to as few as 2 deaths a year. But they saw a need to reach the Latino community (32 percent of the population) with targeted information on pedestrian safety, car seat use and buckling up.

EYSC 4-H youth from the La Casita afterschool program hosted a forum for the Latino community serving as both facilitators and interpreters for a crowd of more than 40 Spanish-speaking families. The youth were able to educate the audience on important traffic safety issues and encouraged them to participate in a child car seat loaner program and bicycle helmet bank.

University of Delaware State Extension Volunteer Specialist Ernie Lopez attended the event and saw the audience really engaged and interested in the information presented. The youth learned the strategic importance of working within culture, providing a two-way communication channel with those who were at first timid about voicing their opinions.

Through this collaborative effort, 27 child car seats and 24 bicycle helmets are now available through the loaner program operated by the church. The youth look for even lower pedestrian injury statistics as the program continues, building human capital in this underserved population. ■

Going Beyond the Community: EYSC Youth Leaders Build Futures

One of the most important aspects of *Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC)* has been the impact on the futures of youth serving on the leadership teams. The opportunity to plan and conduct youth-facilitated public issues forums, implement action plans and even teach these skills to others has led to outstanding opportunities for these youth.

Neil Jackson of Lincoln County, Wisc., is a perfect example. Jackson was part of the University of Wisconsin-Extension Core Leadership Team and participated in the first "train-the-trainer" National EYSC Training Workshop in 2006. He returned to Lincoln County and has served as a 4-H Teen Ambassador, worked to implement Teen Court, and carried out many service learning projects through 4-H in the last five years.

Currently a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Jackson now sits on the State Farm Youth Advisory Board, overseeing grant programs submitted by youth across the country.

"I am blessed and thankful for what my involvement in 4-H and *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* has afforded me," Jackson said. "After years of involvement in 4-H and EYSC, being the one afforded the opportunity to become civically engaged in service learning projects, I am now looking forward to be a part of what makes opportunities like these possible."

Russell Hebert of Fresno, Texas, is taking advantage of leadership development opportunities through the EYSC program at Prairie View A & M University. Hebert implemented youth rodeo camps for get at-risk youth in memory of his best friend killed in street violence. His work led to an invitation to participate in the White House Round Table on Community and Faith-Based Initiatives in December, 2008.

"The EYSC Program has brought a lot of visibility to Fresno," said Hebert's mother, Kathy. "I enjoy the youth/adult partnership approach. We are fortunate to have this program in the community. My son is now going to college because of this program."

Myron Sias is also a member of the EYSC Leadership Team in Fresno, and credits his involvement in the program with helping him establish the blueprint for his future.

"The *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* Program has been an asset to my personal growth and development," Sias said. "At one time, I did not know what I wanted to do with my life, but, I now plan to go to college and major in community development." ■



Myron Sias has planned a bright future after his involvement in the EYSC program.

Rural 4-H Youth and Adults Continue to Increase Leadership Skills

“Youth build strong communities” is the longitudinal vision for the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* project now in its seventh year of funding under the Rural Youth Development Program. A core underpinning of the project is to help youth develop leadership and life skills so they can work successfully in partnership with adults to improve their rural communities.

Evaluation data for eight EYSC7 states determined that the impact shown since the initial year of the youth-facilitated public issues forum model in 2006 became even stronger with the additional leadership opportunities provided by the seventh year of funding in the same communities. Surveys of 523 youth and adults on community leadership teams in 43 rural

communities showed statistically significant improvements to their skill level compared with scores prior to participating. Approximately half were first time participants in the program which shows that previous participants continued to hone their skills in subsequent years.

Of the 16 skills measured, the leadership skills showing the most improvement in mean scores between pretest and posttest were the abilities to:

- organize a group activity (73%)
- plan programs (70%)
- speak before a group (68%)
- evaluate programs (67%), and
- lead group discussions (67%).

These were the five skills most improved under the EYSC6 evaluation as well.

Other improved leadership skills were the abilities to:

- follow a process to make decisions,
- identify resources,
- teach others,
- keep written records,
- share new ideas with others,
- organize information,
- see things objectively,
- work as a team member,
- meet with others,
- relate to people from other cultures and backgrounds, and
- establish time-use priorities.

A full copy of the EYSC7 evaluation can be found on the Rural Youth Development page at <http://www.4-h.org/youth-development-programs/citizenship-youth-engagement/community-action/rural-youth/>. ■

Texas 4-H Promotes Youth Boards through EYSC



Youth in Smith County, Texas, attend the AgriWorld event where youth learned about animals and animal care.

When the Texas Agrilife Extension Service revamped its program development structure statewide in 2005, Youth Boards in five rural underserved counties lead the way in establishing new programs and provided best practices for the remaining 248 counties in the state.

The Board in each county was charged with developing and executing action

plans to address areas of focus in their communities through activities and programs. Four years later, the youth have established a number of programs in collaboration with 4-H adult volunteers and other community youth-based organizations. The programs include:

- Team building, workforce prep and leadership skills development at a day

camp on the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation in Polk County. More than 100 teen participants from on and off the reservation were in attendance.

- Establishing a recycling center and educating residents about the value of going green in Midland County, where youth also built a greenhouse as part of their work.
- Creating “AgriWorld” in Smith County presented to introduce 4-H and animal care to local residents.
- Developing the “Character Counts” program in Baylor County for local elementary school students.
- Adding a sexual education program in a local Bee County high school.

The programs in these counties have helped improved the lives of the residents, and changed the expectations of 4-H youth impact on their communities.

“Youth are viewed by community leaders as responsible, contributing citizens who can identify issues and work together with adults to meet the needs of the community,” said Courtney Dodd, State 4-H Extension Specialist and EYSC project director. ■

Crete: A Safer, Healthier Place Because of EYSC

Crete is a thriving business community of about 6,000 in the Blue River Valley of southeastern Nebraska. When the youth-adult partners in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln EYSC program held community issues forums in 2006, it was decided that the leading issue was providing safe hiking and bike trails for the town.

The first trail for an upgrade was an informal one that went through a wetlands area connecting the middle school with nearby residential areas. In two years of work, the group created a safer pathway for students with a more defined path, a bridge and lighting. They landscaped the light poles with bushes to reduce graffiti and vandalism, and added Bluebird houses for birds that've made their home in an adjacent cemetery.

After the success of the first trail makeover, the mayor became involved with the group and requested another in Tuxedo Park. Youth and adults walked the park with GPS monitors to map out possible trails. Their work led the way to a city council resolution allowing EYSC to take the lead in forming a task force of citizens, business owners, organizations, and local agencies to develop a comprehensive plan outlining the trail opportunities in Tuxedo Park. The

group will also receive guidance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.

Leveraging another grant opportunity, the EYSC leadership team also led a "Health Rocks!" session to educate youth on making healthy lifestyle decisions, and hosted a computer training class for adults. The diverse core leadership team also held the classes in Spanish to reach more of the population in the area.

The Crete Youth in Governance team was involved in addressing human, social, civic/political, cultural, and natural community capitals. It continued to reinforce partnerships with the Crete City Council and other local community businesses and organizations. Each year, its projects have expanded to make Crete a healthier, safer place to live.



Youth in Crete clear a local path, making it safer for community members to use.

"The Crete Youth in Governance team is an amazing group of youth and adults who have had a positive impact on their community," said Dr. Jeff Hart, UNL EYSC Project Director. "These youth leaders teach other youth and adults how to identify community needs by listening to citizens, how to lead projects and activities, and creating a community that is safe, friendly for all cultures, and provides personal growth opportunities for all community youth, adults and families." ■

4-H Youth Volunteer Two Million Hours

4-H's *Engaging Youth, Serving Community Year 7 (EYSC7)* program awarded grants to 9 land-grant universities and colleges in 8 states to develop, implement, and evaluate youth-facilitated community-based issues forums with action plans in rural communities. EYSC7 continued the work started with EYSC4 in a longitudinal effort of funding the same communities. Results in this seventh year continue to be strong:

- Over 600 youth in 45 targeted rural communities participated on state and local leadership teams. They partnered with 450 adults.
- These youth-adult leadership teams engaged an additional 5,823 youth and adults to implement action plans to solve priority community issues.
- Approximately 19% of the youth leadership team members held additional community leadership positions such as community council member and youth advisory commission.
- They volunteered a total of 2,377,716 hours; using the Independent Sector Index value of \$20.25 per hour of volunteer time, representing more than over \$48 million in in-kind support according to the Independent Sector Index value.
- Participants represented diversity with 25% participation from African-American, Native American, Asian and mixed race populations.
- They collaborated to solve community issues with over 300 partners, including government agencies, school systems, and community organizations.
- Grant money was leveraged \$1.17 for each grant dollar with cash and in-kind support, excluding the value of the volunteer labor.

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F.U.N. in the Sun for Florida 4-H Program

Many will argue the main component of 4-H programs is fun. But the word has a different meaning for 4-H youth in Florida's Santa Rosa County 4-H. Here, "fun" stands for *Fitness Utilizing Nature*, a program implemented by the University of Florida Extension.

Youth obesity and nutrition was determined as the priority *Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC)* issue for all of Florida 4-H, in collaboration with the Florida Department of Public Health. Five counties in EYSC established best practices in youth-adult partnerships and developed the *FUN* creative healthy living programming.

"From the beginning, it was the youth core team members that insisted that if we really wanted to get kids involved and interested in learning about nutrition and actually making changes in their eating habits and exercise, that whatever we did had to be fun," said Vickie Mullins, County 4-H

Educator, and member of the Florida Core Leadership team for the last four years.

The Santa Rosa County 4-H Teen Council and EYSC 4-H youth were able to reach hundreds of members of their community through *FUN* projects. With a focus on nutrition, as many as 75 homeless school children received backpacks full of healthy foods for the weekend through the "Apron Strings" project each Friday.

Youth were also able to win scholarships to camp where they not only learned the importance of healthy eating, but also changed the food offered at camp to healthier options. And in partnership with EYSC leadership, a local 4-H club planted a demonstration garden at the Santa Rosa County Extension Office where more than



Youth in Santa Rosa County explain concepts of healthy living and nutrition.

200 youth and adults learned how to grow, harvest and prepare vegetables.

EYSC program teens also presented healthy eating information at local county and state fairs, hosted with the International Bowhunters Association to introduce youth to archery, and were trained in emergency response preparedness.

"Empowering the youth by incorporating their ideas and suggestions in planning and implementing programs and projects and letting them be peer educators made this a success," said Mullins. ■

Idaho Teens Find Growth, Education in P.O.T.S.



Teens and adults work on a community garden in Fisher Pond Park as a way to bring the two groups together.

When the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* project began through the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Service in 2006, Valley County embraced the project. Among several issues that could have been identified, the concept of P.O.T.S.—Positive Opportunities for Teen

Service—began. At a later community forum the formation of several community development groups were created including the Lifestyles and Education Team. The relationship between seniors and youth was one of the very first projects and identified as a community need.

Youth and adults redesigned a community garden at Fisher Pond Park to serve as a place for youth and seniors to come together. It was expanded to include a research area and a handicap accessible cement slab next to the raised garden beds.

Nutritional programs were added to help teens learn to cook foods from the garden. Weekly educational potluck dinners were

held so that teens and adults could create nutritional vegetarian dishes to share. This year, vegetables from the garden were also donated to the WICAP and WIC programs.

This project created human and social capital through the skills learned in gardening, nutrition and health, and financial capital was demonstrated in youth selling compost tea as a 4-H Entrepreneur project. Another related fundraiser was the sale of handmade cards and seed packets.

Through POTS, youth and adults are more aware of the agencies, activities and resources available in Valley County, and now have a way to connect to them. The project provided a safe and open setting for youth and adults to discuss issues in their community, and founded a positive relationship between community youth and seniors that will continue after EYSC funding has ended. It has now received a 21st Century grant to continue the project beyond EYSC. ■

4-H is a community of six million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. National 4-H Council is the private sector, non-profit partner of 4-H National Headquarters located at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) within USDA. 4-H programs are implemented by the 109 Land-Grant Universities and the Cooperative Extension System through their 3,100 local Extension offices across the country. Learn more about 4-H at www.4-H.org or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/4-H.



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