



Youth & 4-H

Idaho 4-H's fifth day and afterschool youth programs teach many life skills

In Idaho's northernmost county, University of Idaho 4-H Youth Development is playing a crucial role in the Boundary County School District's successful transition to a 4-day week. During fall 2006, 4-H's fifth day programs gave students a safe and structured place to be and learn from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fifth-day programs served more than 50 K-6 children plus their middle and high school mentors.

In Clearwater County, some 180 students enrolled in 4-H Friday programs designed to help families with parents who work in the Orofino area. "It takes the worry away from parents knowing their kids are well chaperoned and are doing something fun and educational," said Marie Armitage, 4-H program assistant.

Bear Lake County's once-a-month 4-H programs on Fridays drew 208 young participants during 2006.

"We see these as part of our growing after school programs," says Maureen Toomey, 4-H extension associate in Caldwell and chair of the subcommittee on the development of afterschool curriculum for the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents.

From 2004 to 2006, 4-H afterschool weekday programs served more than 3,200 youth in 18 Idaho counties. 4-H professionals run some programs, but just as often they partner with school districts and community groups.

Toomey says hands-on curriculum available throughout Idaho 4-H is research-based and nationally piloted and evaluated. Programs help prepare youth with more than 30 life skills, including citizenship, creative thinking, decision-making, healthy lifestyles, leadership, and problem solving.

Contact Maureen Toomey at mtoomey@uidaho.edu.

Junior Master Gardener's Latino expansion blends gardening with nutrition and health

Treasure Valley Latino youth are getting a taste of the Idaho Junior Master Gardener program through the vegetables they love best. With its focus on fighting obesity-related health threats, JMG's bilingual expansion teaches its young participants how to know and grow nutritious foods. They learn how to incorporate familiar foods like salsa into healthy diets, how to read food labels, and why exercise is essential. This year's goals include individual and neighborhood gardens in Nampa and Boise.

"They especially enjoy planting because it's very hands-on," says Shannel Stinner, AmeriCorps/Vista volunteer and the program's coordinator.

JMG's partners with the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho, Boys and Girls Clubs, Nampa and Boise School Districts, Neighborhood Housing Services, Padres Unidos, Dia del Niño Celebration, Idaho Department of Education, and Edwards Greenhouse. Contact is Kevin Laughlin: laughlin@uidaho.edu.

DID YOU KNOW?

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PERCENT of Idaho's 33,046 4-H members live in cities of 50,000 or more.

*Source: Idaho 4-H Youth Development, Moscow, 2006

Cummings Center offers outdoor lab for Salmon science days

Salmon science teacher Arlene Wolf knows a program is successful when seventh graders climb back onto the bus saying, "Wow, soils are cool!"

Since 2003, Salmon-area junior high school students have learned about weeds, water, soils, agriculture, and global positioning systems at a series of science days at the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension, and Education Center.

"It's a chance to take kids into an outdoor laboratory," says Shannon Williams, Lemhi County extension educator. They test water samples, roll soil ribbons, hunt for biological control agents, feed noxious weeds to goats, and use GPS units to locate hidden treasures.

Lemhi County cattle producers, agency scientists, and private business owners all lend a hand. "Youth learn best when they can do, reflect, and apply a principle," Williams says.

Contact Williams at shannonw@uidaho.edu.