



Youth and 4-H

Idaho 4-H'ers find their ways—by compass and GPS—at Snow Camp

In the depths of winter, small groups of Idaho 4-H'ers huddle in the snow north of Ketchum, striking the two bookless matches each team is allotted. They boil water, make soup, and drink it. Snugly back in the Central Idaho 4-H lodge, they hoot as a laptop computer loaded with GPS software reveals the wildly zigzagging paths they took as they used GPS units to track down their hidden caches on skis and snowshoes.

UI 4-H educators call it "Snow Camp"—an unusual opportunity in an unusually mountainous state. "4-H is about teaching kids life skills that they can use wherever they go," says UI Extension Educator Cindy Kinder in Camas County. On average each winter, 60 participants learn about first aid, selecting items for a survival pack, navigating by compass and GPS, building emergency shelters, and constructing fire in snow. This year (Feb. 24-26), Lincoln County 4-H program coordinator Kristy Boguslawski hopes to add sled dogs to the invigorating outdoor workshop.

Boguslawski says both low-tech and high-tech navigation skills are vital in Idaho's winter-time backcountry and along its back roads. "Unfortunately, when you're in the mountains, your cell phone doesn't work—and when you have clouds your GPS doesn't work either."

But Boguslawski says one of the most important skills the 13- to 19-year-old youth learn at Snow Camp is surviving three days without television or video games. "They learn to get along with each other without the TV," she says.

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Idaho's future voters gain wildlife habitat management skills, thanks to 4-H

It's a sure bet that our young people enjoy wildlife, but would they know how to manage Idaho's public and private lands for optimum wildlife habitat?

Since 1992, about 750 of Idaho's 10- to 18-year-olds have learned precisely those skills through the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program. They've identified common wildlife foods, judged quality of wildlife habitat from aerial photographs, recommended wildlife management practices, and—as teams—developed rural and urban wildlife management plans.

Explains coordinator Dean Rose, a habitat biologist for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game: "It asks the kids to consider the landowners' current uses and desires, and—given those—what can they do for wildlife as well?"

Winners of an annual contest in Pocatello get post-high school scholarships and a trip to the national WHEP contest.

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DID YOU KNOW?

7 YEARS: The gap in number knowledge between teens initially exposed to math concepts by age 4 versus age 7.

*Source: Teaching Number: Advancing Children's Skills and Strategies, by R.J. Wright, etc., London: Paul Chapman Publishing, p. 1.

PAT helps Idaho parents teach pre-schoolers "numeracy"

When children under six play with building blocks, they learn about small and large, more and less, same and different. In sum, they build lasting mathematical skills that will advance Idaho's economic competitiveness. Unfortunately, in a society weighted towards words, few parents know how to use play to coach their children in numbers.

"Children who come to kindergarten with number sense and strong early numeracy continue to do well in math in later grades," says Diane Demarest, program coordinator for the UI's statewide Parents as Teachers Demonstration Project.

"Research shows that starting early makes a big difference."

Thinking outside the box, PAT has developed a traveling exhibit it calls Block Fest that will deliver opportunities for hands-on math learning to Idaho families statewide. It's made of—what else?!—building blocks.

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