

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## 4-H offers a high-quality youth development experience through Know Your Government

### AT A GLANCE

Research shows that the 4-H program, as a developmental context, is a significant predictor of youth thriving, and consequently positive youth development outcomes.

### The Situation

According to a CDC report from March 31, 2022, more than 37% of highschoolers reported poor mental health with 44% reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Idaho ranks 44 among the states with 17.44% of youth experiencing a major depressive episode in the past year. Positive youth development (PYD) opportunities can move youth beyond surviving to thriving.

### Our Response

Idaho's 4-H Thriving Model gives youth the opportunity to explore their Sparks, alongside supportive peers and adults, and fosters a sense of belonging. Those foundational factors drive Thriving and Positive Youth Development (PYD) outcomes like social competence, positive academic attitude, personal responsibility, personal standards, contribution and connection with others. The 4-H Know Your Government Conference has been providing PYD opportunities for teens in eighth to 10th grade for 36 years. This year 120 youth participated from 23 of Idaho's 44 counties. The Know Your Government (KYG) Conference is planned and implemented using positive youth devel-



Delegates debated a bill presented by one of the steering committee youth in a hearing room of Idaho's State Capitol.

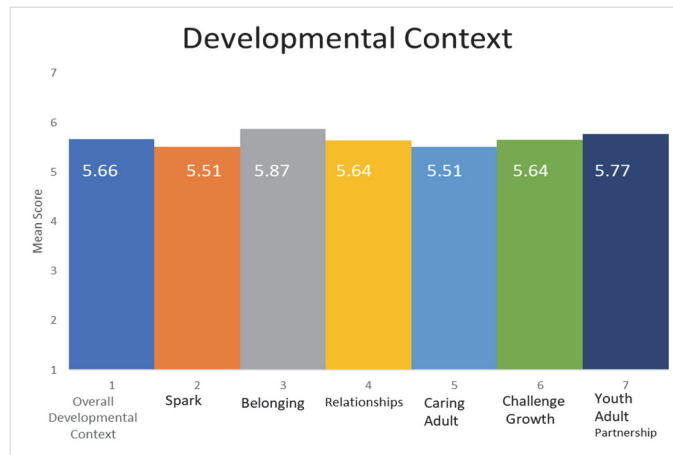
opment principles such as youth-adult partnerships, caring adults and challenging youth in supportive ways that teaches them that they can learn, grow and get better through effort. The conference also encourages teens to challenge themselves to grow in leadership and contribution by offering opportunities to serve on the steering committee. Like many 4-H activities, youth are expected to communicate through public speaking during the mock trial and the mock legislative session. During the conference, youth committee members help facilitate the mock trials and legislative hearings as well as lead their peers through activities in the daily schedule. Youth had the opportunity to meet and visit with elected officials at the KYG breakfast where the governor addressed the conference.

## Program Outcomes

Twenty dedicated volunteers and 12 University of Idaho Extension 4-H professionals spent over 45 hours working directly with youth during the KYG conference. What happens in 4-H programs and how they are planned and led, makes a huge difference to the impact the program has on youth. The 4-H Thriving Model evaluation instrument was used due to its power to identify and predict specific factors influencing program quality. Data was collected from 69 of the 120 youth who participated. Developmental Context Instrument measures the extent to which youth experience spark, sense of belonging and developmental relationships with adults in the program.

According to the data, the Know Your Government Conference is a high-quality program with an overall developmental context score of 5.66 which is a significant predictor of youth thriving and positive youth developmental outcomes.

- Very low-quality experience = 1.0 to 2.2
- Low quality experience = 2.3 to 3.5
- Moderately quality experience = 3.6 to 4.8
- High quality experience = 4.9 to 6.1
- Very high-quality experience = 6.1 to 7.0



## The Future

UI Extension 4-H professionals and planning team members will work to increase the number of participants for the 2024 conference as the historical attendance was around 175. The KYG conference will provide an opportunity for teens to earn school credit with the Learn Everywhere Program established recently by the state legislature.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

In addition to registration, the KYG conference was funded through sponsorship and donations which totaled over \$20.6 million. Major sponsors included Idaho Farm Bureau; JoAnn's Fabrics; Tractor Supply; Attorney's for Civic Education (ACE); Valley Wide Cooperative; James & Autumn Craig.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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