

impact

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

Continuing to help youth thrive in Ada and Canyon counties

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development professionals offer programming that positively impacts youth's unfinished learning and social emotional learning.

The Situation

After the COVID-19 pandemic, youth needed social, emotional and learning support in order to overcome the effects of the pandemic. For two years, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare offered American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant funds that supported Idaho's youth. However, that grant funding is no longer available.

Schools and other out-of-school time organizations are still expressing a need for 4-H youth development programming to address unfinished learning and social emotional learning. Experiential lessons taught by University of Idaho Extension faculty and staff at schools, parks and recreation facilities, and community centers allow youth who otherwise would not be able to participate in 4-H an opportunity to gain the benefits of this program.

Our Response

To continue to address the needs of youth in Ada and Canyon counties, UI Extension educators worked to find new funding opportunities. One such opportunity was an Idaho Out-of-School Network (ION) grant: one for the full school year, the Summer Year Enrichment



Youth afterschool participants at Lincoln Elementary in Caldwell testing different iterations during a LEGO Spike Essential lesson.

Grant (\$74,991.05) and one for the Summer of Innovation Grant (\$20,000).

With the newly allocated ION funds by Ada and Canyon counties, we were able to maintain three program assistants that were hired and trained with ARPA funding. With the Summer of Innovation Grant, an additional program assistant was hired to assist with programming. Being able to retain these trained employees allowed us to continue several afterschool and summer program sites.

With reduced funding, we continued to work with over 40 community program partners that we maintained during the two years of ARPA funding. This was done through staggered schedules that offered reduced hours of programming at sites, but still allowed for as

many youth as possible to be involved in a 4-H youth development program.

Program Outcomes

Between both grants over 2,080 individual youth were served between September 2023 and September 2024.

During the school year grant period we surveyed 99 participants using the nationally validated 4-H Common Measures 2.0 survey for 4-H program quality. The youth surveyed indicated a positive “yes” or “usually” answer to the questions (66.7-93.9%). Examples include:

- “Is 4-H a place where it’s okay for you to make mistakes?” (93.9%)
- “Is 4-H a place where adults care about you?” (92.9%)
- “Is 4-H a place where you feel safe?” (91.8%)

These survey results indicate that faculty and staff are supporting youth in their science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning. Youth who are learning science must learn that mistakes are part of the learning process. These survey results also indicate that faculty and staff are showing that they care and are creating a safe environment for learning. This is necessary for youth to learn and thrive.

The lowest survey score was “Is 4-H a place where you get to teach others what you’ve learned?” (66.7%). This indicates an opportunity to incorporate youth mentorship and to build into programming an opportunity for youth presentations to the groups they are working in.

Through the ION Summer of Innovation Grant over 1,900 individual youth participated in 4-H programs. This was done in collaboration with over 30 community partners and with the assistance of the Ada and

Canyon’s 4-H and Ada’s family and consumer sciences (FCS) team. Through a faculty teaching evaluation from a group of 4th and 5th graders, youth were asked to list one idea they plan to put into practice. Responses included:

- “How to code robots to do actions.”
- “Teamwork and engineering process.”
- “I learned how to code and build. I also learned many key terms.”
- “I plan to practice the engineering process.”
- “I learned how to code, build, learn about the engineering design process and I will practice all of these skills.”

The Future

The need for youth to participate in out-of-school time opportunities like University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development is a continuous need, especially for our urban and rural isolated youth. Plans to further develop programming that will help these youth thrive include seeking additional funding opportunities to support programming.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

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