

impact

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

Library partnership reaches underserved youth audiences with 4-H curriculum

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension introduces programs and staff expertise to new audiences through 4-H learning labs taught in collaboration with library's youth programs.

The Situation

Family and consumer sciences (FCS) 4-H leaders in Nez Perce County continually discuss recruitment strategies to bring more members and leaders into the county program. Standard marketing and word of mouth advertising has not led to a significant increase in FCS enrollment. FCS leaders are currently focused on raising awareness of the variety of FCS projects available to youth in the Lewis-Clark Valley.

The University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program developed Outside the Box Learning Labs during the height of the pandemic to deliver 4-H services safely to adult and youth clientele. These “grab and go kits” are also a great curriculum to repurpose as a recruitment tool to introduce new and underserved audiences to 4-H curriculum.

Our Response

UI Extension faculty and staff in Nez Perce County contributed to this effort by teaching a variety of classes in the community to demonstrate skills learned in FCS. We partnered with the Lewiston library to provide opportunities for youth to learn about FCS project areas, practice new skills and develop interest in learning more.



Decorating aprons during Exploring Foods class led by Kathee Tift, family and consumer sciences UI Extension educator.

Between October 2022 and January 2024, Nez Perce County's UI Extension office and the Lewiston City Library taught a series of six multiweek 4-H learning labs in-person to a total of 54 youth (5-16 years old) and introduced them to a variety of projects and educational activities available in the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program. The library provided a maker space classroom with technology support and marketed the 4-H learning labs in their youth program flyers. The classes were filled to capacity and had waiting lists. Extension provided all the equipment and supplies needed to teach and evaluate the classes.

- Create Art Now — taught by the FCS educator and the youth services librarian. Skills practiced

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include contour line techniques, mixing, shading and tinting paint colors, and sculpting with tissue paper and modelling clay.

- Junior Master Gardener Adventures — taught by the FCS educator and horticulture associate. Learning focused on what plants need to live and grow, parts of a plant, space considerations for seed planting and transplanting seedlings.
- Skillet Creations — taught by the FCS educator, advanced master food safety advisor (MFSA) and 4-H coordinator. Hands-on activities included correct handwashing techniques, accurate measurement of dry and liquid ingredients, balanced nutrition and safe handling, use and care of kitchen knives.

Program Outcomes

Youth completed a written survey at the end of each learning lab. Twenty-eight evaluations completed by participants were returned for a 52% response rate. Of those youth responding:

- 68% reported making new friends
- 89% reported learning new things
- 96% reported adults and teen helpers listened to what they had to say when doing the activities

Comments from youth include, “I really enjoyed the experience over the last few weeks” and “I really enjoyed this activity, and I’d like to be able to do other learning labs.”

We invited family members to stay in the classroom if they chose and we were able to answer questions about 4-H and the UI Extension in Nez Perce County as we were demonstrating/teaching. While a few of the youth were enrolled members of University of Idaho or Washington State University 4-H clubs, a majority of the youth we worked with were not familiar with 4-H before participating in a learning lab.

Youth and their families were provided with 4-H program pamphlets and contact information for Nez Perce County’s UI Extension office. They were invited to call or visit anytime to learn more about University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development family and consumer sciences clubs and projects.

The Future

Future recruitment plans include the MFSA teaching Preserving the Harvest at next year’s youth activity camp and a redesign of the 4-H activities day by the 4-H coordinator to reflect skills and talents in the region such as welding, farming, gardening, woodworking, photography, international cuisine, etc.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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37-24-ktift-4h-curriculum • 10/24