

impact

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

4-H camp makes positive changes on teens

AT A GLANCE

4-H provides a positive youth development experience through adventure camps for military-connected teens who face an extra level of stress over their civilian peers.

The Situation

Military family life poses unique challenges for youth, for example whether the military-connected parent is wounded, ill or injured, as well as household food insecurity.

According to the 2024 Military Teen Experience Survey, only 8% of military teens report high mental well-being, while 35% report struggling with low well-being. High quality 4-H programs provide an experience that supports resiliency and thriving from supportive relationships with peers and adults, opportunities to build new skills and a place to experience a sense of belonging.

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development was one of eight state programs that received federal funding to offer a nearly all-expense paid Military Teen Adventure Camp (MTAC). 4-H hosted Walk on the Wild Side National 4-H Camp, May 28-31 at the YMCA Camp in Cascade and July 22-25 at the McCall Outdoor Science School for military connected teens from across the nation. The high adventure, high energy camp provided youth the opportunity to build skills in relationship building, responsibility and teamwork.



Rafting the Payette River was one of the most exciting high adventure activities offered at both camps.

“Mending Fences” was one of the workshops featured that provided activities aimed at building skills to support emotional wellness and recognize warning signs related to stress and mental health. Youth also practiced visual art techniques through “4-H Create Art Now,” a 4-H developed national curriculum. The camps’ recreational opportunities included whitewater rafting, kayaking, biking, hiking, ziplining and more.

Program Outcomes

The Military Teen Adventure Camp (MTAC) program was designed to enable military-connected teens (those of active duty, guard, reserve and retired personnel) to develop life skills such as relationship-building, self-confidence, teamwork and problem-solving through a variety of outdoor experiences. The

American Camping Association Youth Outcomes Battery Assessment Instrument was used to evaluate the camp. It was a two-part response with a one-six scale of agreement with each statement rated before and after camp.

Relationships significantly contribute to building resilience because they provide a sense of belonging, trust and reassurance, which allows individuals to better cope with stress and adversity. According to the camp evaluation, youth reported a friendship overall mean score of 5.08 indicating campers improved their friendship skill because of participating in the camp. The friendship change score falls between the 60th and 70th percentile of the typical American Camping Association (ACA) non-profit-camps. This shows that Idaho's Military Teen Adventure Camp (MTAC) campers experienced more improvement than at least 60% of the population.

Helping youth practice responsibility is an important skill in preparing youth to be ready for work and life. According to the campers, responsibility overall mean score was 5.09 showing that MTAC campers improved their responsibility skill because of participating in the camp. Idaho's MTAC campers experienced more improvement than at least 50% of the population.

When young people learn to solve problems, they feel more capable and in control, leading to increased confidence and resilience. Teens overall mean score for problem solving was 5.13 which falls between the 80th and 90th percentile of the typical ACA non-profit camps. This shows that Idaho's MTAC campers experienced more improvement than at least 80% of the population.

Teamwork prepares teens for success in work and life by developing crucial skills like communication, collaboration, conflict resolution and adaptability. Idaho campers' overall teamwork mean score was 5.32 which indicates they improved their teamwork skill because

of participating in the camp and experienced more improvement than at least 80% of the population.

Teens had this to say about the most beneficial part of camp:

- "Exercise in the outdoors experiencing the beautiful Idaho outdoors, building teamwork through activities."
- "Getting to learn new skills and meet new people."
- "I think that these are absolutely imperative because it is important for military youth to have a connection with other military youth that understand what we are going through better than our civilian peers."

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The funding for Military Teen Adventure Camp is made available through a partnership between the Department of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy, Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, Children, Youth and Families and USDA/NIFA for military youth, ages 13-18 of active duty, guard, reserve and retired personnel.



Teens accepted the high ropes course challenge along the Payette River.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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