

# impact

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

## Teton 4-H reduces barriers to participation through targeted outreach and fundraising

### AT A GLANCE

UI Extension in Teton County addresses increasing demands for youth services by building staff capacity, broadening partnerships and increasing program offerings targeting underserved youth.

### The Situation

Known for its agricultural roots and outdoor recreational opportunities, Teton County, Idaho has attracted an influx of new residents. The population increased 8% between 2020 and 2023 and a total of 24% since 2010. Rapid land use development and population growth have brought challenges such as economic and social inequities, cultural changes and increasing demands for service organizations, childcare and youth development programs. Teton County government provides partial funding to support 4-H youth development programs. As such, University of Idaho Extension staff have had to build their 4-H program capacity through public outreach, fundraising and grant development, and education and outreach to elected officials and other county staff.

UI Extension faculty and county staff have had to creatively harness opportunities for partnership and capacity building through fundraising and collaborative program efforts. As staff and financial capacity have grown to address increased demands due to population growth, 4-H program access for underserved and underrepresented youth has also increased. Yet, reaching underserved audiences continues to be an ongoing challenge as youth grow older, demand for youth



4-H youth and staff work on integrating science and art at a summer 2024 STEAM day camp.

programs continues to grow and Teton County faces budget constraints.

### Our Response

Over the past five years, the UI Extension 4-H Youth Development program in Teton County made intentional strides to sustainably grow the 4-H program's capacity and increase access to programming for underserved and minority youth. Goals were made to increase program capacity, inclusiveness and diversity. UI Extension staff utilized various methods to gather stakeholder input to identify community needs and opportunities for growth (e.g., attendance at civic meetings and community events, annual UI Extension advisory board meetings, and utilization of surveys and interviews with community leaders and 4-H

volunteers). Staff also implemented a 4-H leaders council and diversity and equity training for 4-H volunteer leaders.

Since 2019, UI Extension has partnered with the AmeriCorps program to secure five 4-H AmeriCorps instructors to increase STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) programs to underserved youth. The UI Extension office leveraged this capacity to receive over \$170,000 in grant funds and donations to support 4-H. The bulk of the funding came through two Idaho Department of Health and Welfare grants funded by the American Rescue Plan Act to reduce learning loss through the COVID-19 pandemic. This boost in capacity allowed the office to hire a full-time 4-H coordinator in 2021 and other seasonal support staff in 2022 and 2023.

To better reach underserved and minority youth, in 2022, the 4-H program staff established a consistent collaborative STEAM program with the Above and Beyond the Classroom (ABC) out-of-school program for kindergarten to third grade youth. Over 50% of these youth are Hispanic/Latino, and over 70% are considered at-risk. By bringing 4-H programming directly to these youth through afterschool and day camp programs, the 4-H program in Teton County more than doubled outreach to underserved audiences and grew annual 4-H enrollment. For example, the 4-H STEAM club grew enrollment from 12 youth in 2022 to 52 youth for the 2023-2024 4-H year, which required the club to be split into two different clubs. ABC youth also received enrollment scholarships. Overall afterschool and STEAM programs grew by 52%. New 4-H clubs were also added, bringing in additional youth and volunteers (i.e., babysitting, cat, llama and goat packing clubs).

### Program Outcomes

In 2024, University of Idaho Extension faculty surveyed parents of program participants to gain feedback and better understand their motives for enrolling their

children in 4-H. At the end of the 2023-2024 4-H year, 43 4-H parents completed an online Qualtrics evaluation of the Teton County 4-H program (25% response rate). Demographics of survey participants had 56% of youth enrolled in non-animal 4-H clubs, 44% in animal 4-H clubs and 30% either in the afterschool or day camp programs. Prior to participation in 4-H, 64% of participants had little to no knowledge of Teton County's 4-H programs. After participation, over half of program participants had "some" to a "high level" of knowledge of 4-H programming.

The primary reason for signing up for 4-H was child interest (89%), followed by content/subject matter (86%). Over half of the respondents indicated that the affordable price of the program was a primary reason for signing up.

At the start of the 2024 school year, Teton County School District 401 implemented a four-day school week. For the parents that completed the evaluation, 41% indicated they would like an all-day 4-H program on Fridays, with 30% indicating a morning-only program and 32% indicating an afternoon program.

### The Future

The UI Extension in Teton County is recruiting a 4-H AmeriCorps service member to help continue the afterschool and day camp programs. This will allow for continued partnership with the ABC after-school program. Extension faculty and staff are also working on capacity building and volunteer recruitment so that 4-H clubs can meet for club meetings at the UI Extension office on Fridays. Monthly 4-H day camps are also being planned to help provide a safe, affordable and enriching environment for out-of-school youth.

### Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Thank you to our partners Above and Beyond the Classroom of Teton Valley (ABC) and the Teton County Fair Board for their support of our collaborative 4-H programs.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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