Nez Perce County and Asotin County
Summer Day Camp 2001

The Situation
There are few educational opportunities available for underprivileged and at-risk youth during the summer months in the Lewis-Clark Valley. The cost of attendance in quality programs and accessibility to them can be prohibitive.

Our Response
Nez Perce and Asotin County worked together to develop a day camp that would offer a quality experience to youth and introduce them to 4-H club activities.

The Idaho Community Foundation awarded us an $800.00 grant to partially fund a summer day camp for valley youth. The grant allowed us to keep registration costs low and to offer scholarships for attendance.

With the goal of recruiting an underserved population into 4-H, we focused on having youth experience a diverse sample of club activities rather than completing all the requirements of a project record book.

Camp was held during the first week of August with youth completing two 2-hour classes in afternoon sessions for five days. A group meeting was held each day before classes began to support communication among youth and leaders as a community. Classes taught included Dutch Oven Cooking, Healthy Snacking, Plants and Bugs, Scrapbooking, and Cake Decorating. A snack was provided between sessions.

An elementary school in a lower-income Asotin County neighborhood was chosen as the site for our first summer day camp. We hoped that the familiarity and accessibility of the school would increase the likelihood of reaching our targeted population of underprivileged youth. Parents appreciated the afternoon time frame, which allowed them to drop their children off on their lunch hours and pick them up at the end of the workday.

Posters and brochures about day camp were distributed throughout both counties at swimming pools, libraries, grocery stores, and community centers. We also provided summer day camp materials to valley area professionals to share within their agencies.

Program Outcomes
Twenty-eight area youth completed day camp; seven were from Nez Perce County and 21 were from Asotin County. Class sizes ranged from five to 14 participants. Smaller class sizes were optimum for allowing one-on-one interactions between leaders and youth. Junior leaders assisted by facilitating classes and camp where needed.

An evaluation survey completed by parents and instructors of the summer day camp showed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of instruction,
the dates, time, location, and cost of the camp. Forty-seven percent of the responding parents indicated they would be willing to teach or assist in camp activities next year. One parent wrote, "Excellent camp! I expect you will be able to double your attendance next year through word of mouth."

On the last day of camp, several youth were interviewed for an article in the Lewiston Morning Tribune entitled, “They Make Their Cake and Eat It, Too; Summer Classes Are Fun For Valley Youth.”

The day camp’s influence of sharing knowledge and skills between the two counties is being continued among club leaders. A Nez Perce County Home Economics/Career and Leisure leader has accepted an invitation to teach cake decorating to an Asotin County leader’s Foods of the Pacific Northwest club.

The Future
We expect this program to continue annually and grow in scope and numbers to meet the needs of Lewis-Clark Valley youth. Outside funding will be actively sought to keep costs to parents as minimal as possible. Community support in the form of expertise, funding, and materials and supplies will be sought. We will advertise day camp early in the year and provide leader training for it in the spring to encourage parent participation as class leaders.

Our goals for future programming include:
• Introduce 4-H activities to underserved youth in grades 3-6
• Steadily increase the number of youth attending day camp
• Maintain small class sizes
• Provide traditional and innovative activities.

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