A Successful Media Campaign Reaches New 4-H Volunteers

The Situation
The decline in the number of 4-H clubs during the 1990’s (estimated at 16% between 1995 and 1999) makes it imperative that new clubs be formed. The greatest limiting factor in forming clubs is volunteer leadership. Experience shows that if leaders are available, there are always youth who will join. By the same token, clubs that have dynamic volunteer leadership in sufficient numbers grow in size and maintain kids’ interest through the teen years. A marketing campaign, coupled with organization of new groups, is the best way for units to increase participation in high impact delivery systems such as 4-H clubs.

Ada, Canyon, Elmore, Gem/Boise, Owyhee, Payette, Valley, and Washington counties joined forces with the State 4-H Office and University of Idaho Communications and Marketing to develop a media campaign. The project goals were:
- Increase participation in 4-H programs by adults and youth
- Raise awareness of 4-H as a rural and urban program
- Promote 4-H’s affiliation with the University of Idaho

Our Response
A planning committee of faculty, staff, and volunteers worked with University Communications and Marketing (UCM) to develop the media campaign. A $5,000 grant was matched by UCM to develop a promotional campaign with a local television station. KIVI Idaho 6 conducted a three-month comprehensive project plan, including news coverage and promotion to support 4-H programs. The campaign was kicked off with a press conference, featuring Idaho’s First Lady Patricia Kempthorne.

Twelve 4-H special reports were broadcast on Good Morning Idaho and News Idaho 6. Topics included how 4-H volunteers enriched the lives of youth, 4-H volunteer opportunities, and the variety of youth programs in 4-H.

In addition, eighty-five 30-second promotional announcements using the “Discover the World” public service announcement ran during the three-month period. An additional 150 “want ads” listing specific 4-H opportunities available to volunteers in the participating counties. One Sunday morning ½ hour Newsmakers program featured 2 volunteers, 2 youth, and an Extension Educator. KIVI also provided a 2-hour media program for 4-H students held at the KIVI studio.
Approximate value of the KIVI Idaho 6 promotion is $34,000. The University of Idaho and State 4-H investment more than tripled.

Program Outcomes
Ada County has received 32 new volunteer applications for the 2001-2002 4-H year, representing a three-fold increase from last year. A total of 98 new volunteers were recruited in District II A partnership was developed with the Idaho Air National Guard and Ada County 4-H summer programs as a result of the campaign. Gem County trained 26 new volunteers in 2001 compared to 8 in 2000. They only difference in Gem county was the media recruitment campaign. A University of Idaho professor reported that he believed the media campaign was one of the best promotional efforts to show how 4-H is a part of the University of Idaho.

4-H youth and volunteers were actively involved in assisting with the media campaign. They were interviewed for the special features. This was a new experience for many of the members and volunteers. They were able to see what involves a live TV broadcast.

Future plans include running the public service announcements again in 2002 and 2003. Local Extension educators and youth specialists will propose special features promoting 4-H to be shown on the local TV stations. The volunteer recruitment campaign will continue through 2003.

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