Youth Have Better Understanding About Food Products and Associated Jobs

The Situation
Fifty-eight percent of 6.8 million youth involved in 4-H live in towns and cities with more than 50,000 people. Only 10 percent actually live on farms and have a direct rural background. Many youth have no direct understanding about where many products originate. They believe food comes from the grocery store, not from a farmer’s field or a rancher’s feedlot. Youth also don’t realize the variety of jobs involved and the number of people employed in production of final products. The workshop topics at the Boulder Mountain Youth Camp were selected to teach youth about raw supplies and how they become the final products consumers could purchase at the local store.

Adult volunteers and industry ambassadors were asked to speak on a variety of topics, including wool, beef, trees, and food products. The target audience was youth, ages 8-13, who participated in the workshops at camp. The food products workshop at camp had 19 participants; only two had a direct farm background.

Our Response
The food products workshop focused around making trail mix. Educational methods included: participants reading how ingredients are grown, locating on maps where ingredients are grown, reading the trail mix recipe, and measuring the correct amounts of each ingredient. Towns were drawn on paper starting with the farm of a particular trail mix ingredient, then adding businesses needed to process the raw food product, and ending with the supermarket and the consumer’s home. Participants split into groups and were asked to write down the jobs involved at each place of business. Youth described their parents’ occupations. Adults explained that job’s importance to the community. In the end, trail mix was prepared and eaten.

Program Outcomes
The workshop directly affected the 19 youth involved. The other 100 youth at camp and their friends and family who also learned indirectly through personal contacts. Benefits from the workshops included a better understanding of food products and agricultural jobs and careers. This program developed life skills of youth, including public speaking, reading, problem solving and measuring. The program created awareness of jobs and careers involved in product preparation. Post-camp evaluations showed four of nineteen youth reported they learned more about where food comes from.

For More Information
Cindy A. Kinder, Extension Educator
University of Idaho, Camas County Extension
PO Box 429
Fairfield, Idaho 83327
(208) 764-2230
fax (208) 764-2454
E-mail ckind@uidaho.edu