Idaho 4-H Leader’s Forum Succeeds from Youth and Adult Partnerships

The Situation
With the reorganization of University of Idaho Extension youth programming there was an opportunity to build partnerships with teens on a district basis. After the State 4-H Ambassador Training in 2002, newly trained Ambassadors were included on the planning committee for the 2003 State 4-H Leaders Forum to be hosted in District III.

Our Response
The teens involved in the planning committee included State Ambassadors, county teen representatives to the District III Leaders Association, State 4-H Teen Officers and others who just volunteered to help. The thirty-five-member Forum planning committee included eleven teens. The teens met several times during the year and also attended regularly scheduled committee meetings. Most of their correspondence was done via e-mail, which proved to be an effective way to communicate with the teen team. Job descriptions were created by the teens for important positions including workshops, teen event coordinators, speaker introductions and thank yous, sharing fair displays, transportation, goodie bag items and decorations.

Program Outcomes
The theme of the 4-H Forum was “2003 4-H Youth and Me” and it was the perfect opportunity to build a strong youth and adult partnership.

Several teens on the planning committee had traveled to national 4-H activities and informing others about all the opportunities available in 4-H was a major goal for them. The teen team suggested workshops for the teen track and decided to include the following, 4-H, Beyond Your County; Dare to Lead; Row, Row, Row Your Boat (captaining your own “life boat”); Succeeding in the Working World and Fighting Invisible Tigers (stress management for teens). Teens either taught the workshops or identified adults who would. Activities were planned by the teens during the entire Forum; adults who brought youth with them to the Forum knew that the youth were involved in safe activities during free time and evenings.

In addition to the teens involved on the planning committee, the State 4-H Teen Officers attended this Forum. They served as positive role models to others and were able to encourage teens to get involved and stay active in 4-H.

The Statewide 4-H Public Speaking Contest was also new this year. Eleven teens participated at the Forum contest and the first place winners in each category spoke at the closing session. Cash
scholarships were awarded to the first and second place winners in each category. The contest was well received by Forum attendees and it was suggested that the winning speeches be presented at the Distinguished Service Award Banquet next year so more people could enjoy them.

The 2003 State Leaders Forum had the highest attendance of any Forum held in Idaho. One hundred ninety two adults and sixty-two teens registered to attend. This large number was due to including teens on the planning committee, inviting teens to attend the Forum and providing fun and educational activities while they were there.

Forum attendees were asked to complete evaluation forms. On a scale of 1 to 5 (high) the overall Forum rated a 4.1 and teen activities rated a 4.8. Some of the comments included on the evaluations were:

- “I enjoyed the teen workshops that I went to.”
- “After interviewing the teens, they loved the teen tract, good job, great program.”
- “Please keep involving teens.”
- “Very impressive tract for teens.”
- “It was refreshing to see the teens there and very actively participating, good work.”
- “This was a great opportunity and affordable for us teen parents.”
- “Thank you for making the effort to include us, it means a lot to be treated equally.”
- “Great idea; teens seemed to be having fun.”
- “Great to encourage the ‘partnership.’”
- “Happy to see you involve teens.”

Partnerships were created with our local teens and adult volunteers, State 4-H Teen Ambassadors, the State 4-H Office, the Idaho State 4-H Leaders, the District III 4-H Leaders, Idaho State 4-H Teen officers and other youth and adults.

The success of this endeavor made it quite clear to everyone on the planning committee that there was a need for youth involvement in all aspects of program planning. Youth and adult partnerships really work in 4-H and create programs that will be continued.

**Future Plans:** The 2004 Forum planning committee from District IV has all ready decided to include teens on their planning committee and in the Forum next year. They conducted their own evaluation to help determine programming and their results showed that the teens enjoyed the educational workshops as much as the fun activities. When asked to name three things they gained at the Forum many listed teamwork, leadership skills and stress management.

**For More Information**

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