The Situation
A University of Idaho study of Idaho youth showed how important it is for kids to feel accepted and safe during out-of-school hour activities. Seven out of ten 4-H youth reported that 4-H is a “safe place for learning” and “4-H clubs are supportive environments where I feel accepted for who I am.” With this in mind, Minidoka County 4-H staff saw the need to provide 4-H curriculum based workshops during the week-long spring break from school. Area youth are traditionally out of school the third week in March and in most cases adults in the family are employed and are not able to stay home. This leaves youth home alone or in other less than desirable environments.

The Minidoka County 4-H Promotion and Expansion Committee recognizes the need for youth activities during long breaks from school and supports the decision to provide workshops for these youth. Area schools appreciate the value of hands-on learning and the development of life skills and are helpful in distributing information.

Our Response
A project called “Jump Into Spring” began in Minidoka County in 2002 to provide something fun and educational for kids to do during spring break. Classes offered were two hours long and the materials used were from 4-H curriculum. This was a good opportunity to work on a 4-H project but youth did not need to be in 4-H to participate. The fee charged for the classes was $5.00 per person, which allowed the youth to attend one class or all six. Classes offered included scrapbooking, leather craft, family folklore, frozen bread dough, financial management, and ethics and etiquette. An all day youth and adult partnership workshop was also held.

Jump Into Spring has expanded to include more classes and reach a larger audience each year. Partnerships were also formed with area businesses, the local library, city police, 4-H volunteers, 4-H teens and other county 4-H programs in District III. In 2004 many of the classes were taught by area business owners or 4-H volunteers from nearby counties. This enabled the information to spread across county lines and in 2005 most of the county 4-H programs in District III offered workshops for youth during spring break.

Participation continues to grow and fees were increased to $7.00 in 2005 for one or all classes offered. Classes included; Smart Cookies, Furry Scarves, Rocketry, Cowboy Poetry, Pillow Making, Shooting Sports, Dutch Oven and Wildlife. “Art, Palette of Fun” (a project in a day) was also offered for an additional $5.00. In one day this project was completed demonstration given, record book finished and ribbons awarded. These projects were also displayed at the Minidoka County fair.

Pillow making was a favorite of the younger boys participating in Jump Into Spring activities.
**Program Outcomes**

The attendance for classes offered during Jump Into Spring activities has increased from 151 (six classes) in 2002 to 457 (nine classes) in 2005. The majority of youth attending participate in four or more of the classes. In 2005, 41% of the youth attending were not 4-H members. Ages invited have increased from nine and older in 2002 to including “clover buds” in 2005, some as young as five years old. Suggestions for topics are no longer decided by the 4-H staff but recommended by volunteer adults and 4-H teens that also commit to plan and teach the sessions. In order for families to continue to participate, registration fees have been held to a minimum with donated items and support from adult volunteers.

Musical finger painting was included in the art project in a day. Young artists learned about rhythm, color and self-expression.

Families who participated in 2005 were surveyed before and after the program to determine their level of knowledge about 4-H and change in the following life skills; communication, problem solving, planning/organizing, teamwork and personal safety. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), knowledge about 4-H increased from 4 to 4.5. All showed an increase in the knowledge of life skills (average of 3.4 to 3.9) with the largest increases in problem solving, 3.4 to 4.1, and planning/organizing and teamwork.

Families were also asked to evaluate the level of enjoyment and knowledge learned during the classes. On the same 1 to 5 scale, classes averaged 4.4 in the level of enjoyment and 4.6 in knowledge learned. The Dutch Oven class and Art, Palette of Fun were reported to be the most enjoyable (each rated 4.8) and also had the highest level of knowledge gained (5). Proving learning through 4-H can really be fun!

The survey also asked families how Jump Into Spring effected their activities during spring break.
- It was a great way to spend my spring break vacation.
- My kids were glad to have something fun and social to do, it’s nice to be able to pick classes.
- Loved the idea, it gets more kids into 4-H.
- Kids had a great time and can’t wait until next year, thanks so much.
- Kids had something to do, learned a lot and had fun.

Wearing knitted scarves they made in a previous class, Minidoka 4-H teens prepare for the next workshop with Educator Gillespie.

**Future Plans:** The Minidoka County 4-H Program will continue to organize spring break activities for area families including more 4-H projects in a day.

**For More Information**

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