

4-H builds healthy kids

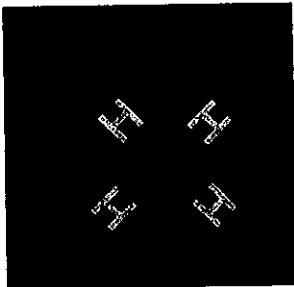
Boundary County's 4-H program has recently been recognized by the Boundary County Coalition for Families for building assets in children and youth.

The criteria for building assets is based on the Search Institute's list of 40 Developmental Assets that all children need to succeed. According to 4-H Program Director, Erika Thiel, "everything we do is for the development of the youth, as opposed to just learning a skill."

Classes are taught by parents and community members, which addresses the need for children to have active involvement by parents and other adults in their life.

As part of the 4-H motto "Heart, Head, Health and Hands" youth are taught planning and decision making, conflict resolution, personal safety, self esteem, and caring — all of which are listed as assets by the Search Institute.

Other assets that 4-H fosters are positive peer influence,



adult role models, creative activities and involvement in a youth program.

A 2003 study by the University of Idaho confirms that the 4-H program is actively promoting positive behaviors and reducing high risk behaviors. Idaho 4-H participants are more likely to take leadership positions, turn to their parents for advice about drugs and sex, give money to charitable organizations, and have mostly A's in school compared to youth who have not been involved in 4-H. The risk of alcohol use, shoplifting, illegal drug use, property damage and cigarette

smoking is reduced by half if a child is involved in 4-H.

4-H continues to adapt in order to better serve youth. This year 4-H incorporated a new teaching curriculum based on the experiential learning model. This means that all participants are learning skills like problem solving, critical thinking, and generalizing knowledge with every project, regardless what 4-H project they take.

The Boundary 4-H program currently serves 275 children and youth and has 52 leaders. In addition to the standard 4-H classes, our county also offers Cloverbuds for children ages 4-7, and the After School Academy for K-6th graders. For more information on getting involved as a 4-H participant or as an adult volunteer, call the Extension Office at 267-3235. For more information on the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, visit their website at www.search-institute.org or www.search-institute.org.