Explore 4-H Afterschool Fun—a Friday Program for Youth

The Situation
In May of 2005 the Boundary County School District implemented a 4-day school week. This created a schedule where youth would attend school Monday through Thursday with no class held on Friday. The shortened school week was the result of a failed maintenance and operations levy. With the new schedule, the traditional afterschool programs that would typically run from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. were no longer viable options.

Our Response
UI Extension worked with parents, community members, organizations, churches, and the school district to address this emerging issue.

As a result of this coordinated planning effort, University of Idaho Extension took the lead in developing and implementing Explore 4-H Afterschool Fun. Explore 4-H Afterschool Fun is a Friday program where youth have the opportunity to attend a day camp full of enrichment activities, homework help, physical activity and more.

Program Outcomes
In 2005-06 over 60 youth were enrolled in Explore 4-H Afterschool. Currently for the 2006-07 school year, 50 are enrolled. In the program youth participate in a number of experiential, educational activities including entomology, pottery, art and technology, fitness education, and nutrition. In addition to these activities the program also incorporates community service projects.

In cooperation with the District 1 Extension Nutrition Program a pedometer program was implemented. The pedometer program focused on daily activity. Each program day youth were given a pedometer to wear to track their steps. At the end of the day the steps were compiled and charted on a map.

The program also participated in an Operation Military Kids project to create a Pictures from Home compact disc that was distributed to all of our local military members and their families who were currently deployed. A computer based art software program and a mobile computer lab provided by Operation Military Kids was used to create pictures of home and thank you cards.
Although University of Idaho Extension took the lead, the program would not have been possible without the tremendous community support and dedicated volunteers. Currently the county library participates in the program by conducting a monthly story time and provides a revolving supply of books for the program. The local DARE officer has been involved in the program providing a bicycle safety workshop. Other community partners include the Boundary County Middle school which provides the facility, Safeway, University of Idaho Extension Nutrition Program, Elk Mountain Farms, and Kootenai Valley Pheasants Forever.

In addition to the community partners the program has been successful in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Throughout the year we have had over 17 volunteers who have contributed more than 550 hours to the program. Our current volunteer base is comprised of adults and well as high school age youth and junior high mentors.

Explore 4-H Afterschool would not have been possible without support from the National 4-H Council-Engaging Youth Serving Communities Grant project, The Idaho Community Foundation, and the Americorp—VISTA Volunteer program.

The Future
Explore 4-H Afterschool Fun is in its second year of operation and growing. UI Extension is continuing to seek opportunities for youth during the school year and summer months.

For More Information
Sarah Howe, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension—Boundary County
6447 Kootenai Street
Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805
208-267-3235
Fax: 208-267-3056
Email: sarahs@uidaho.edu

Erika Thiel, 4-H Program Coordinator
University of Idaho Extension—Boundary County
6447 Kootenai Street
Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805
208-267-3235
Fax: 208-267-3056
Email: ethiel@uidaho.edu

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