

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Learning From 4-H Leader Appreciation

The Situation

Volunteers deserve to be thanked frequently, but sometimes this is easier said than done. In December 2006, Minidoka County Extension created “Especially For You Day,” a day just for volunteers to be pampered. In addition District III Extension faculty and staff hosted an adult retreat in March 2007 at the Central Idaho 4-H Camp called the “Celebrate Volunteers Retreat.” Volunteers were encouraged to relax and enjoy the winter solitude. Many of the organizers were surprised by the candid responses from volunteers when they were asked about why they continue to be involved in the 4-H program, and what the main challenges were that they faced.



Minidoka County 4-H volunteers have fun learning to make gift boxes from Christmas Cards.

Our Response

Minidoka County’s “Especially For You Day” included a masseuse, manicurist, soap making, card gift boxes, ribbon pillows, and lots of great snacks. 4-H Leaders and other volunteers including the Fairboard and Livestock Sale Committee members, 4-H program youth, judges and other helpers all received personal invitations to attend.

The only rules that volunteers had to follow were that they were not allowed to plan, set up, teach, bring food or clean up, (all the things that they are usually involved in). It was a challenge for some volunteers to just relax and enjoy the day. Stations were staffed by a professional massage therapist and nail technician; both commented that most of the people they met had never had a massage or manicure. Imagine that, volunteers who provide their time to others, but not taking time out for themselves!

The “Celebrate Volunteers Retreat” started with a one-mile ride into camp on a trailer pulled by a snow cat. The lodge was comfy and the food was good and hot the evening everyone arrived. Workshops included 4-H CSI, parliamentary procedure, working with parents, cross country skiing or snowshoeing, and personal pampering, which included foot soaks, pedicures and skin care tips. The Central Idaho 4-H Camp Board members prepared all the food and arranged for the snow equipment and other necessities.

Program Outcomes

“Especially For You Day” was attended by over 30 adults and youth. At the end of the day everyone agreed that the best part was the networking that took place between those who care about 4-H and leaders feeling good about themselves because someone took the time to say, “Thanks for all you do.”

Fifteen adults attended the “Celebrate Volunteers Retreat” and “Good food, Good friends, Good times.” was noted by one participant as the best part

of the weekend. The only negative comments were about the chilly out houses!

Evaluations from both events indicated that these types of activities were a really good idea and the volunteers appreciated it. Winter retreat participants wanted to be more involved in the cooking and clean up, and appreciated the opportunity to attend trainings that provided information they could share with other leaders and youth after returning home.



Networking with other 4-H volunteers and enjoying the beautiful winter weather rated highest at the “Celebrate Volunteers Retreat.”

When volunteers were asked what they liked most about helping with 4-H, most said that it was “being able to share their knowledge with the kids.” One leader said it was, “The interaction with adults and youth in the county.” “I like to see the youth learn and grow.” “The joy of seeing youth that you have helped succeed in the world,” and “The way it makes you feel afterward, that warm feeling like you did something good,” were also listed.

Other important information gathered from evaluations showed the concern and pure frustration volunteer leaders have with some parents. When volunteers were asked what they liked least about helping with 4-H some responded:

- Dealing with parents that are not involved
- Parents
- Parents bickering
- Cranky parents

- Seeing the conflicts with all the changes and the parents trying to make it about themselves and not the children

Working With Parents-Let the Fireworks Begin was one of the trainings presented at the “Celebrate Volunteers Retreat,” and deals specifically with working with parents in a 4-H club setting. Discussions following the training indicated that volunteers felt parental involvement was essential to successful youth development and several participants asked for more training and information about working with parents. Extension Educator Donna R. Gillespie was invited to present this training as part of the 2007 Twin Falls County leader training.

Future Plans: *Working With Parents-Let the Fireworks Begin*, is one of the fifteen power point presentations included in the “4-H Leaders’ Training Series” developed by Gillespie which has been distributed state-wide. Additional training and information is now available. Jeni Bywater, Minidoka County 4-H Program Coordinator is partnering with the Minidoka County 4-H Leaders Association to plan training based on information gained from program evaluations and additional “Especially For You Day” activities. Kristy Boguslawski, Lincoln County 4-H Program Assistant continues to work with the Central Idaho 4-H Camp Board to plan important youth and adult programs, including an annual “Celebrating Volunteers Retreat.”

For More Information

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