

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Developing Workshop Leadership in 4-H Camp Counselors

The Situation

Boulder Mountain Youth Camp (conducted the first week in July at the South Central Idaho 4-H Camp) typically has 100-120 youth and adults participate in the weeklong event. Campers come from Blaine, Camas, and Lemhi counties. Many youth are 4-H members but the majority are not. Participants engage in activities that contribute to the overall theme of the camp. The planning committee has great ideas for workshops and activities, however finding individuals willing to direct and teach youth activities can be a challenge.

Our Response

In 2002, University of Idaho County Extension Educators, 4-H Program coordinators and assistants, and 4-H volunteer leaders from Blaine, Camas and Lemhi counties, solicited the help of teen camp counselors. The goals of the camp planning committee were to: 1) increase counselor skills and understanding of how camp workshops are planned and implemented, 2) encourage youth to be more active in planning camp, 3) find more help for camp workshops and activities. At the counselor training and prior to camp, counselors either elect to help lead youth from activity to activity, or they conduct a workshop. Counselors that select a workshop to do, must plan, organize, prepare, and lead the workshop. Camp fees provide needed materials for these workshops. Topics have included; building rockets, Costa Rica, France, making cookies in a jar, and making bat houses. Building community service items included what to build, what is needed, and who to give it to.

Program Outcomes

In 2004, a survey was conducted with those who led a workshop. All stated that they learned at least one thing from doing the workshop, and that preparedness, organizational, speaking, and leading skills were obtained. One camp counselor stated that “you need to plan and make sure it fills up all your time,” indicating that time management was a skill he needed to address. What counselors enjoyed the most about leading workshops was “trying something new and still helping.” A 2007 survey of camp adults indicated that over the past five years, youth step-up to the challenge of doing a workshop and they grow in leadership skills. One adult stated “The counselors leading workshops are becoming more and more comfortable in their teaching role.” The planning committee was able to achieve their goals. Camp counselors were able to take a more active role in camp planning and were given the opportunity to build on their organizational and leadership skills. The use of counselors this gave the camp more people resources. One 4-H Program Coordinator stated that our camp counselors are highly recruited for another non 4-H camp. Camp organizers from other organizations, recognize the leadership in our youth. Also, youth have increased in their participation in other activities. This has helped their teen group program be successful.

The Future

The Boulder Mountain Camp planning committee plans to continue the use of camp counselors by encouraging them to participate in leading and teaching workshops. The counselor training will

include more activities in time management and understanding of camper learning development.

For More Information

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