The Situation
The 4-H Youth Development Program has deep roots in each of the seven Idaho County communities it serves. Over 100 volunteer leaders work with 425 youth members enrolled in the program to provide a high quality youth development program.

In 1996, as the membership enrollment data for the year was being analyzed, it became apparent that membership enrollment dropped sharply as youth entered the 10th grade. As 4-H members entered high school many more opportunities became available to them that directly affected the time dedicated to their membership in the 4-H Program.

Our Response
Idaho County 4-H leaders and members were invited to participate in an advisory group to determine what kind of program or activities would encourage teens to remain involved in the 4-H Program during their high school years.

Through these advisory group discussions, the Idaho County 4-H Ambassador program was developed. The program guidelines identified include:

The overall goals of the Ambassador program:
• To develop public speaking & leadership skills in older 4-H youth.
• To help retain older youth in the 4-H program.
• To increase visibility of Idaho County 4-H program.

Criteria for applying:
• Sophomore, Junior, or Senior in High School.
• Completed 4 years of 4-H.
• Currently enrolled in Idaho County 4-H Program.
• Ambassadors must re-apply for positions each year.

Application process:
• Turn in a completed application form to the Extension Office by designated date.
• Each applicant will be interviewed and selected by the 4-H Program Council.
• Ten applicants will be selected to participate in the program each year.

Other requirements:
• 4-Hers must maintain membership in their original club.
• Develop a plan of work with goals for the coming year. This plan must include at least one community service project.
• 4-Hers are encouraged to attend the annual State 4-H Ambassador Training.
• 4-Hers will publicly present at a minimum of three meetings each year. One of these meetings will be at a local civic organization. Two other presentations will be made at other 4-H club meetings.

• 4-Hers will publicly present at a least one activity at the fair.

• 4-Hers must attend monthly meetings. Meetings will focus on leadership development training in the following areas:
  1. Public Speaking Skills
  2. Personal Presentation Skills
  3. Leadership Skills
  4. Organizational Skills
  5. Teamwork

• 4-H Ambassadors will work as a team to plan and implement Idaho County 4-H activities and events.

• 4-H Ambassadors will be encouraged to participate in national and state trips/programs.

Four local Idaho County businesses were contacted to provide financial support to conduct the program. These businesses agreed to sponsor the program annually. The donation is used to pay for all educational materials, meeting expenses, clothing requirements and travel expenses.

The financial support for the Idaho County Ambassador Program allows 4-H members from all socio-economic backgrounds an opportunity to participate in the program.

**Program Outcomes**

2008 marked the 12th year of the Idaho County 4-H Ambassador program. Since the first group of Idaho County 4-H Ambassadors were selected in 1997, 104 4-H members in grades 10 - 12 have participated in the program developing public speaking, leadership and organizational skills.

Since the inception of the program in 1997, the retention of high school-aged (grades 10, 11, & 12) 4-H members has increased by 35%. The Ambassadors are excellent role models for younger 4-H members encouraging them to stay in the 4-H Program and one day becomes Ambassadors themselves.

The Ambassadors are highly visible throughout Idaho County and have been invited to participate in activities and events outside of 4-H. This has been a valuable avenue of membership and volunteer leader recruitment.