4-H Afterschool shows impact on life skills

The Situation
In America today, 28 million kids have parents who work outside the home. This means that between the hours of three and six, these kids are potentially left unsupervised. The hours between three and six are considered the “danger zone.” This is the time when most youth participate in risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking and/or doing drugs.

The White Pine 4-H Afterschool program began in 2007 with funding from Children, Youth and Families At-Risk Sustainable Communities Program (CYFAR SCP). The purpose of CYFAR programs is to provide opportunities for at-risk youth to grow and become productive members of their communities.

Our Response
As a response to community needs, it was decided that the White Pine 4-H Afterschool Program would run three days per week, offering enrichment in arts, culture, sciences & technology, and healthy living, while focusing on life skill development.

The 4-H Afterschool program uses the experiential model of learning-by-doing, a hands-on approach to teach youth. Children explore or experience an activity, reflect on the exploration through sharing and processing, and then apply the learning to another experience. Through “doing,” “reflecting,” and “applying” children develop both content and life skills.

Life skill development at the White Pine 4-H Afterschool program focuses on communication, critical thinking, positive identity and healthy lifestyle choices. Communication is a process of creating and sharing meaning between peers, youth, family members and caring adults in verbal and non-verbal manners. Critical thinking requires recall and comprehension, analysis, comparison, inference and application, and synthesis and evaluation (www.national4-h.headquarters.gov/about/4h_impact.htm). Positive identity is valuing oneself, pride in oneself, understanding one’s abilities, strengths and limitations. A healthy lifestyle is selecting a way of living that is in accord with sound condition of body and mind, prevention of disease and injury (http://ext.wsu.edu/lifeskills/viewlife.asp). The life skill survey, consisting of 12 questions/indicators addressing the four life skills, was given to children in May 2008. The children rated on a scale of 1-4 what they thought their skill development was before participating in the program and then at the end.

Program Outcomes
Demographics: There were 30 participants in the White Pine 4-H Afterschool program. Of the 30 participants, 22 completed life skills surveys. Four participants were American Indian, 6 were Hispanic,
6 were Caucasian and 6 were racially mixed. Thirteen participants were male and 9 were female. Eleven were grouped with the 9-10 year olds and 11 were grouped with the 11-13 year olds.

Overall, 41% indicated a gain in communication skills, 48% in healthy life styles, 73% in critical thinking skills, and 62% in positive identity.

When broken down by age, the 9-10 year olds reported the largest gain in critical thinking skills followed by positive identity. The 11-13 year olds reported the largest gain in critical thinking skills and then positive identity.

When looking at gender, females reported a 75% increase in healthy life styles skills and a 75% gain in positive identity. Males reported a gain of 77% in critical thinking skills and 54% in positive identity.

The Future
The White Pine 4-H Afterschool program will continue to focus on life skill development. Each year, new activities are added to enhance the communication, healthy living, positive identity and critical thinking skills of the children. The focus of 4-H Afterschool is to develop life skills, giving youth the opportunity to learn skills to help them live productive and satisfying lives.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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