

IMPACT

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Fabulous 4-H Fridays help at-risk youth learn life skills

The Situation

In 2007 Salmon School District 291 adopted a four day school week. Youth attended school Monday through Thursday and were at home or day care on Fridays. At-risk youth attending the Lemhi's After School Program were impacted by the change. Youth are referred to the After School Promise program by teachers, counselors, law enforcement personnel, administrators and domestic violence and family service personnel. Youth are rated on a scale of one to five with one being "minimal" and five being "extreme/confirmed." The nine factors rated low self esteem, poor attendance at school, academic failure or low academic skills, domestic violence in the home, single parent or grandparent or foster care, exposure to drug and/or alcohol use in the home, lack of supervision after school, poor social skills, or low income home.

The traditional program at the Lemhi's After School Promise program was shortened from 10 hours of contact time with youth each week to six hours because of the scheduling change. This greatly reduced the youth's contact with a program offering life skill development and prevention curriculum.

Some youth attending the program were left home alone or with day care providers on Friday. A partnership with Lemhi County 4-H, the National 4-H Council Engaging Youth, Serving Community Grant and Lemhi County Extension to meet the needs of the youth on Fridays.

Our Response

During the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school year, 4-H and the Lemhi's After School Program developed a series of 4-H Projects-in-a-Day held every other Friday during both Fall and Spring After School pro-



Fabulous 4-H Friday participants examine the water diversion for the Pahsimeroi Fish Hatchery during a field trip.

gramming. The events offered five hours of contact time with youth, a lunch provided by After School and a 4-H project. The 4-H project consisted of a basic introduction to the project with a modified record book, a short demonstration and a service learning project.

The shortened format allowed youth to experience the project in a few hours, learn basic skills and determine if the project was something of interest to them. Youth were able to try projects they may never have signed up for, like theatre or Making the Most of Me. Even though Projects-in-a-Day are shortened versions of traditional 4-H projects they still retain the necessary pieces to follow the experiential learning model and develop life skills.

Over 20 youth attended the seven events held during the 2007-2008 school year and over 20 youth attended the six events held in the 2008-2009 school year. Youth participated in projects such as garden-

ing, model horse, theatre, making the most of me, rocketry and livestock.

During the 2009-2010 school year 10 Fabulous 4-H Fridays were held every Friday in October, November and December. The Projects-in-a-Day centered around the central theme of Wildlife and included fishing, a fish hatchery tour, raptor education, bat education, high mountain critter exploration, fish and game forensics investigation, endangered species education, a nature walk, outdoor cooking and natural art.

Between 10 and 25 youth attended each event. Youth again completed a record book stating their goals and evaluating their learning throughout the day.

The Project-in-a-Day format offered youth exposure to 4-H's fundamental goal of life skill development while developing project specific skills.

Program Outcomes

Youth participating in the Fabulous 4-H Friday program were surveyed and interviewed. In a pre-then-post survey conducted during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school year 11 of the 12 life skills evaluated increased. With five skills showing a significant increase.

The 12 life skills of wise use of resources, goal setting, record keeping, learning to learn, problem solving, decision making, community service, contribution to group effort, leadership, teamwork, marketable skills, and self motivation were evaluated. The life skills listed were taken from the 35 life skills included in the Targeting Life Skill Model.

The following six life skills showed a significance increase through participation:

- Wise Use of Resources
- Record Keeping
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Contributions to Group Effort
- Marketable Skills

The following five life skills showed a slight but not significant increase through participation:

- Goal Setting
- Learning to Learn
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Self Motivation

The Community Service life skill showed a decrease in confidence levels.

During interviews with participants, 80 percent reported a positive response when asked if they completed the record books, learned a specific skill or helped others. Eighty percent shared a specific skill they had learned and a way they had helped someone else. Ninety-three percent of participant interviewed reported positive responses to a question assessing their ability to reach their goals for the event and also stated they had positive feelings about themselves while attending the Fabulous 4-H Friday events. Seventy-three percent shared a positive response when asked if they used their resources wisely while 67 percent said they contributed to group effort and were helped by others. Forty percent of youth reported a positive response when asked if they were a leader.

The Fabulous 4-H Friday program provides Project-in-a-Day programming that develops life skills in youth at-risk as well as increasing youth's self esteem. The program will continue in the Fall of the 2010-2011 school year under the Planet Earth theme.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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