A Good Reason to Stay in 4-H!
Leadership Challenge Camp

The Situation
In the six northern counties of Idaho, 4-H has been a successful youth program since its inception in 1914. The Idaho 4-H program in the region currently involves over 3500 youth and 650 volunteer leaders. Presently less than 15% of potential youth who are eligible participate in CES sponsored youth education programs. There is a significant number of 4-H members that drop out of 4-H when they reach 7-9th grade. Efforts need to be made to encourage a higher percentage of Idaho's youth to remain in 4-H programs, especially teens. Because of the heightened concern about local and regional youth issues such as teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness and the choices offered to teens today, alternatives need to be offered that help with decision making. The 4-H program is a good choice to accomplish this task. Regional activities and 4-H/Youth camps develop esprit d' corps among youth, introduce them to the diversity within the region and encourage them to remain in 4-H/Youth programs.

Our Goal
To implement a leadership development, self esteem and team building education program (camp) consisting of 35 hours of training for youth and adults targeted to 7th-9th graders from the 6 northern counties of Idaho. Annually for 45 4-H/Youth members and 10 or more adults to gain skills and understanding in leadership concepts, personal assessment and management, cooperative learning in groups and how to make appropriate choices in an emotionally safe environment.

"Leadership Skills You Never Outgrow" is an activity based curriculum that teaches leadership in seven basic areas: Understanding Self, Communicating, Getting Along with Others, Learning, Making Decisions, Managing, and Working with Groups. Over 90 research based activities demonstrate and explain various behavior styles, focus on fun, help youth to think through opportunities and make choices.

The "4-H Challenge Program" is a natural resource based, outdoor adventure experience that facilitates youth prevention, education and development services through an experimental model. Program activities are designed to offer a sequence of manageable challenges. Completion requires participants to learn and utilize life skills such as appropriate decision making, team work, trust and good communication.
**Achievements**

Eighteen youth and five adults from six Idaho counties took part in the 1992 camping program at Inchelium, Washington. All participants learned team building, self esteem, hygienic and leadership skills in a laboratory atmosphere. Both low and high ropes course activities were completed.

Thirty-four youth and six adults participated in the 1993 Leadership Challenge Camp at the UI Clark Fork Field Campus. Pre-camp training and planning meetings were held with a selected group of planners. An in-depth program planning guide was developed for use in running this camp. Participants who chose completed applications and were interviewed. Five leadership challenge planners (LCP) and two alternates were selected to plan the 1994 camp. The LCP and youth participants already have been in contact with each other and are excited about the next Leadership Challenge Camp.

In post camp evaluations most participants indicated they learned "how to work with others" and "leadership skills." Youth most liked the "4-H Challenge" activities. They indicated they planned to use the skills gained at camp in their careers, that it increased their understanding of sequenced learning related to team building, working in groups and to positively impact their communities, schools, youth organization and families. As a result of Leadership Challenge Camp:

- Participation doubled from the first to second year of the camp through peer promotion by youth.
- 7-9th grade youth were prepared to be cabin leaders at North Idaho 4-H Camp, return as Leadership Challenge Planners, participate in 4-H Ambassador program, work in 4-H/Youth clubs and attend 4-H Teen Conference or other youth leadership trainings.
- Three youth conducted demonstration training in their 4-H club.
- One youth who participated both years is hypoglycemic. He showed marked improvement in personal management related to his health condition and did peer counseling with a younger camper with the same problem.
- Over 15 youth were active in leadership planning in their counties and 4-H clubs.

**Cooperators**

Northern Idaho District I 4-H Camp Board
Carol Benesh, UI Extension Home Economist - Boundary County
Jim Wilson, UI Extension Agricultural Agent - Kootenai County
Kevin Laughlin, UI Extension Agricultural Agent - Bonner County