

# IMPACT



University of Idaho  
Cooperative  
Extension System

Gem County Extension System, 2199 South Johns, Emmett ID 83617-9496

January 25, 1995

## District II 4-H Certified Camp Counselor Training

### *The Situation*

Teenage 4-H camp counselors were performing adequately in their roles. However, there seemed to be gaps that could be eliminated with improved counselor preparation and a more in-depth and sequential training program.

### *Our Response*

We developed a three-step Certified Camp Counselor program. From "basic" to "advanced" they include: Counselor-in-Training; Junior Counselor; and Senior Counselor. Each level contains requirements for participating in counselor training workshops, attending camp planning sessions, and success as a camp counselor. Positive camp counseling evaluations must be received by each counselor in

order to proceed to the next level.

"Basic Counseling" is required training for beginning counselors. Topics include: philosophy of camping programs; leadership styles; communication techniques; and problem solving.

Additional responsibilities are required for each advanced counseling level. For example: Senior counselors must develop their own counseling plan and help teach new counselors.

During the three years of this certification program, teens have participated in over 200 hours of training and planning. Training takes place in two-day or three-day retreats. Subjects presented are human relations, teaching techniques, and environmental awareness.

Included in this curriculum are: 1] *Dare to Be You* -- developing life skills in decision-making, assertive

communication, responsibility, and self-esteem; 2] *Teens Reaching Youth* -- learning how to teach younger children and peers; 3] *Recreational Leadership* -- developing skills to lead games and recreation; 4] *How to Talk so Campers Will Listen* -- learning effective communication and discipline techniques; 5] *Natural Resource Subjects* -- teaches Project Learning Tree, Stream Watch, and Project Wild.

### *Results*

Young people -- 150 in number -- have participated in the last five-year period. These counselors have learned, applied, and demonstrated organizational and human relationship skills that produced higher quality camping programs. Counselors, as well as campers, have benefited.

over



University of Idaho

*College of Agriculture*

A focus interview was conducted with current and former camp counselors. These counselors said that problem solving, team building, communications, and getting and keeping campers' attention were the four most important things they learned in training. In addition, counselors indicated dealing with stress, understanding parent's concerns, learning about developmental characteristics of children, encouraging techniques, and taking full responsibility for teaching a workshop or conducting an activity as other important areas.

A male 16-year-old counselor said, "When I had problems teaching a class or with campers in my cabin, I've been able to recall what I learned about communication. Other counselors have helped to put difficulties in perspective and to concentrate on the necessities for making camp successful."

A female counselor said, "Being able to talk to previous counselors about problems and difficulties helps greatly. We counselors had a question and answer period that helped us relate to the new experiences we could expect at camp."

Written evaluations from each level of counselors, indicated they increased their understanding of legal responsibilities related to child abuse and gained skills for team

building. Experienced counselors gave high marks to learning teaching skills and conflict management. Beginning counselors gave high scores to understanding their counselor responsibilities and the philosophy and goals of the camp program.

### *Cooperators*

1. American Forest Council
2. Western Regional Environmental Education Council
3. Idaho Fish and Game

### *Participating Counties*

The Certified Camp Counseling program has been fully implemented in the following counties: Ada, Valley, Gem, Boise, Owyhee, Canyon, and Elmore. Participation in some of the training include the following counties: Adams, Payette, Washington, Blaine, Latah, and Malheur County, Oregon.

### *For More Information*

1. Kati Cheldelin, Extension Agriculture/4-H Agent, Canyon County Extension System, PO Box 1058,

Caldwell, ID 83605;  
208/459-7461.

2. Vi Rexford, Extension Home Economist/4-H Agent, Gem County Extension System, 2199 South Johns, Emmett, ID 83617; 208/365-6363
3. Linda Webb, Extension Home Economist/4-H Agent, Valley County Extension System, PO Box 510, Cascade, ID 83611; 208/382-3249

4H94GE01.doc