Teens Learn Entrepreneurial Skills

The Situation
Teaching the youth of today to be active in creating their own economic opportunities is an important aspect of present day education. According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, a survey under the auspices of the Center of Human Resource Research at Ohio State University and the U.S. Bureau of Census, conducted over 10 years (1979-1988), young adults dominated the migration streams at all geographic levels - local, regional and international.

The Idaho Population, Vital Statistics and Migration Summary 1980-1990, indicated the outmigration of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years in Southeastern Idaho was in significant numbers. For example, 34 percent of young adults in Caribou County migrated to other locations. One of the major reasons for change of residence by Southeastern Idaho young adults in their late teens and early twenties is economic - lack of career opportunities. For young adults to remain in rural areas it is necessary for them to identify products or services they can provide to generate an income. These young people need activities to earn an income.

Our Response
For the past three years, an all-day conference for Southeastern Idaho high school students and teachers entitled Young Entrepreneur Seminar (YES) has been held in Idaho Falls at the Eastern Idaho Technical College. These conferences have been co-sponsored by the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System, Idaho Small Business Development Center-Idaho State University and Eastern Idaho Technical College.

The goals for the conferences were: 1) introduce students to entrepreneurship as a possible career opportunity; 2) give students a better understanding of the role of small business in the U.S. economy; 3) provide an incentive for young adults to remain in or return back to a previous location; and 4) encourage teachers to implement entrepreneurship as a discipline in the class curriculum (family and consumer sciences, business management, marketing, etc.).

Each year a coalition of about 15 people worked on preparations for the conferences. Representation was from higher, secondary and technical educational institutions, industry, financial institutions, private businesses and others. This coalition planned, coordinated, implemented and evaluated the events very effectively.

The workshops focused on two educational tracks. One track was for the students and the second track was for teachers. The day’s events included guest speakers, business people and youth testimonials, workshops, computer simulations, business trivia and a business bowl. Program emphases were placed on the following topics: “Is Owning A Business Right For You?,” “What Is The Function Of The Business plan?, “How To Market Your Business For Success, and “Financing Options: What You Need To Know.”
A Youth Entrepreneurship Lending Library was
developed by the University of Idaho Cooperative
Extension System. The Library includes books,
videos, computer software and simulations. A list of
these resources was provided for each teacher and
was available for use. Each participant was provided
a three-ring binder for his/her resource materials on
entrepreneurship.

The Participants
A total of five hundred and ninety-three students and
52 teachers attended the events.

Achievements
Many positive comments, written and verbal, were
received about the conferences from the students and
teachers. A post-evaluation form was prepared and
completed by the students. Following is a summary
of the 1995 results: A significant number of
participants (73%) indicated they had not thought of
entrepreneurship as a career choice prior to attending
the conference; 76 percent stated that as a result of
this conference, they will continue to prepare for
entrepreneurship; and 39 percent indicated they were
interested in learning more about entrepreneurship.

Highlights of the 1995 YES program were
documented on a videotape. The videotape is
presently being used as an educational tool for the
entrepreneurship program in Idaho and other states.

The Future
Plans are already underway for the Young
Entrepreneur Seminar (YES) to be held in the spring
of 1997 in Idaho Falls. The goal is to have 300 in
attendance.

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